

**An injury to one is an injury to all**

# **Solidarity**

**& WORKERS' LIBERTY**

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Since 2005 the Unite union in New Zealand has run a “Super Size My Pay” campaign focussing on fast food and coffee shop workers. Starbucks workers have gone on strike. Unite has won wage increases for young workers.

An organiser from Unite will be touring the UK in February to tell us how they did it.

More, page 3.

# **How young workers can organise**

**NZ unionist's tour will tell how it's done    turn to page 3**

# US: pick-the-millionaire time

BY SACHA ISMAIL

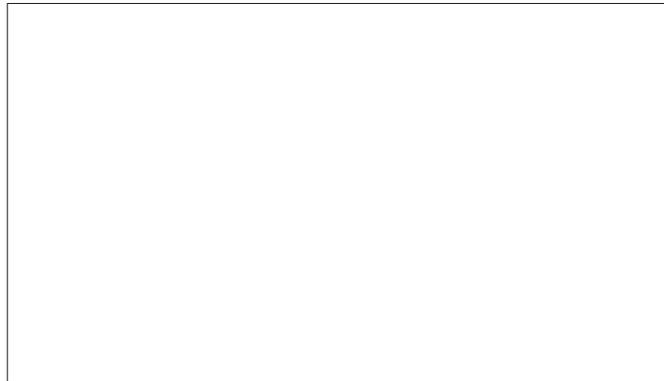
**H**UNDREDS and even thousands of enthusiastic supporters have turned out at rallies and actions for the various candidates in the "primary" elections currently underway to select the two main parties' candidates for the November 2008 US presidential election. It is a striking contrast with the now almost universal apathy surrounding elections in the UK: even if Gordon Brown had allowed a contest for the Labour leadership, can you imagine crowds of thousands turning out to support him?

The reality behind the crowd scenes in the US is, however, far from democratic. In place of the kind of membership-controlled, more-or-less democratic, class-based party that the Labour Party (to a certain extent) used to be, both Republicans and Democrats are not only almost identical in policy terms, but function as political cartels through which different factions of the American ruling class manipulate the public. (Even Britain's bourgeois parties are more democratic in how they function.) Through these two parties, public funding of them and the primary system, the state and big business are strikingly intertwined.

The degree of control from below exercised in the primaries is almost zero: this is a process in which an atomised electorate picks from a list of millionaires whom corporate funding has allowed to get a hearing in the corporate media.

This is true of both parties. In the case of the Republicans, it goes without saying; in the case of the Democrats, it should go without saying, but doesn't, due to the demagogic, populist rhetoric through which sections of the party maintain their support from the US unions.

The British liberal press has made a big fuss about how the Democrats' candidate for president will almost certainly be black (Barack Obama) or a woman (Hillary Clinton); but neither represents even the kind of "rainbow coalition", left-populist politics which fuelled Jesse Jackson's insurgency in the 1984 Democratic primaries. The corporate connections and unambiguously pro-corporate politics of both Obama and Clinton are well known: for



Barack Obama

instance, Clinton's most senior adviser is Mark Penn, a corporate PR man whose clients have included Shell, the Argentine junta and Union Carbide in the wake of the thousands of deaths its negligence caused in Bhopal in India.

There has also been a certain amount of fuss about John Edwards, the former North Carolina senator who was John Kerry's vice-presidential candidate in 2004. Edwards finished second in the Iowa caucuses (the first primary of 2008), beating Clinton into third place with populist rhetoric about ending poverty and reclaiming American democracy from control by the corporations. In terms of his critique, Edwards is willing to be quite radical:

"I have seen the seamy underbelly of what happens in Washington every day. If you're Exxon Mobil and you want to influence what's happening with the government, you go and hire one of these big lobbying firms. This is what you find. About half the lobbyists are Republicans, and about half the lobbyists are Democrats. If the Republicans are in power, the Republican lobbyists take the lead, passing the money around. If the Democrats are in power, the Democratic lobbyists take the lead. They're

pushing the same agenda for the same companies. There's no difference."

Although he is to the left of Obama and Clinton, however, Edwards is clearly part of the same corporate elite.

His working-class background (his father was a millworker and his mother a postalworker) is, of course, irrelevant here, except in so far as it brings into relief the platinum-spoon upbringings of most US politicians. Edwards is himself a millionaire, a former corporate lawyer who, in addition to notoriously spending \$400 on a haircut, earns many hundreds of thousands consulting for companies, including private equity firm Fortress Investment. In 2006, the latter paid him \$479,000 as a consultant; in 2007, the press reported that it owned part of a company responsible for preying on poor home owners, including by foreclosing on the homes of many Hurricane Katrina victims. Edwards divested and spent a lot of his own money to create a fund for those who had lost their homes, but the contrast is instructive.

Unsurprisingly, then, Edwards' policies are a left-leaning version of the standard Democratic fare. They go nowhere near solving problems

like the 44 million Americans with no health insurance, let alone tackling the deep and growing inequalities of US society.

In any case, even genuinely left-wing Democrats like Jesse Jackson and, today, primary candidate Dennis Kucinich, are supporters of a bourgeois political party that is an essential part of the machinery through which the US ruling class maintains its political power. Socialists cannot support any Democratic candidate, because doing so means giving up on the task of building an independent voice for the US working class.

In the primaries, the US unions have functioned as clients of the various Democratic candidates (the public sector union SEIU, for instance, supports Edwards, while the local government union AFSCME supports Clinton and the firefighters' union supported Connecticut senator Chris Dodd). In November, they will all line up behind whoever the Democrats eventually select, but the relationship will be essentially the same. What is needed, above all, is for a significant section of the labour movement to break with the Democrats and client-patron politics, and to establish a democratic party of its own.

Contrary to myth, there have been many projects for workers' representation in the United States — from Henry George's trade union-sponsored campaign for mayor of New York in 1886, which Engels hailed despite its inadequate programme as a step towards working-class political independence, to the Farmer-Labour Parties of the 1920s and the political discussions in the new industrial unions of the 1930s. All these initiatives remained in embryo or died quickly, in part due to the inadequate (or in the case of the 30s, treacherous, Stalinist) politics of the socialists involved, but they show there is nothing "exceptional" about the US.

Nor is this just ancient history. In 1996, an independent Labor Party with over two million affiliated trade unionists was established, but it failed to break completely with the Democrats and eventually withered. Reviving such initiatives is the key task for socialists, and all those who want to see something more like real democracy in the US.

## Labour and Tories race to attack benefits

BY DAVID BRODER

**D**AVID Cameron has launched a fresh offensive against single parents, unemployed and disabled people with plans to force them into work. The Tory leader's proposals include making the unemployed participate in "community work", penalties for those who turn down "reasonable" job offers and cutting the number of people receiving incapacity benefit by 600,000 over the next five years.

At the heart of the Tories' plans is a vast overhaul of the incapacity benefit system, which caters for 2.6 million ill and disabled people, most of whom suffer from either mental disorders or musculo-skeletal diseases. Writing for the *News of the World*, David Cameron claimed that "I don't believe that there are nearly half a million young people in Britain with a disability which prevents them from doing any work at all. What we have is a culture of despair, where kids grow up without any idea that for our society to function everyone has to pull their weight if they can." In order to get these people to "pull their weight", Cameron suggests a reassessment of incapacity benefit claimants which will force some onto the lower-rate Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), an "allowance" received dependent on actively seeking work. Conveniently, Cameron says that these cuts will raise the £3 billion necessary to fund his "helping hand" for married couples.

But it is not just the Conservatives who are stressing the need for people with mental disorders to get a crap job on the minimum wage.

Gordon Brown told viewers of the BBC's Andrew Marr Show that New Labour's plans to get people to work were "far more revolutionary" than the Tories' suggestions. "Today the issue is people don't have the skills, even when there are 600,000 vacancies in the economy... the next stage is not what the Conservatives are talking about but giving people the skills to get into work."

Rather than presenting the Tories' plans to slash incapacity benefit by billions of pounds as an outrageous attack on the ill and disabled, New Labour claim that the Tories' plans are

just a half-hearted imitation of their own idea that what people on incapacity benefit really need is not benefits but... training.

Indeed, this row serves as part of a generalised attempt to undermine the welfare state. The Tories have also proposed compulsory (privately or voluntary-sector organised) "community work" projects for those on JSA for two years and removing JSA for up to three years for those who turn down three job offers.

The bourgeois parties' "welfare into work" agenda is a thinly veiled attack on the disabled, are scapegoating them for 'wasting money' that

could be better spent on strengthening the institution of marriage.

But it is not our only argument that benefit claimants really are unable to work, or that maybe they don't much like living on a pittance. We also contest the idea of compulsory employment, when most of the jobs out there are alienating, tedious and badly paid — why should anyone have to do a demoralising job where they get bossed around for £5.50 an hour? We oppose any plans which make benefits dependent on claimants' willingness to work.

## Further curbs on freedom of assembly

BY REUBEN GREEN

**I**T comes as no surprise that Gordon Brown's comments about freedom of protest have turned out to be double-peak and spin. The government is currently consulting — via a webpage! — on Sections 132-138 of the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (SOCPA) (2005), which ban unauthorised protest within one square kilometre of Parliament. The consultation is being presented as a move to repeal the draconian laws. But the way the questions are posed in the consultation suggest that is actually an attempt to bring in far greater police powers in relation to "public order".

Gordon Brown wants to "harmonise" police powers to control marches and demonstrations across the UK. That will mean extended current police powers in most recent Public Order Act (1986) that apply to marches so that they cover all assemblies. At the same time he wants to strengthen police control around Parliament Square, so that marches as well as assemblies can be banned. The state already has a raft of powers to control, restrict and ban dissent in the form of the Public Order Act, The Terrorism Act, ASBO legislation and various bye-laws.

Protestors since the 2005 G8 protests in Scotland — when many current police powers were tried out — have felt the

punch of the complex and confusing array of arrestable laws. Basically the police can arbitrarily break up any protest, up to and including leafleting on a high street!

The devil will no doubt be in the detail of the new legislation and we should all pay attention and oppose any extension of police power over the right to assemble. Equally, the existing powers need to be challenged politically and also broken in practice by organized popular movements. We also need to advocate positive programme of civil liberties, free speech, freedom of assembly and demonstration.

See [www.indymedia.org.uk](http://www.indymedia.org.uk) for details of the Freedom of Assembly Day of Action, 12 January. The "consultation" closes on the 17 January.

# How to organise young workers

ONE of the most visible impacts of capitalist globalisation has been the massive expansion of low-paid (and often semi-casual) jobs in the service sector. This “precarious” employment — in bars, restaurants, nightclubs, hotels, fast-food chains, supermarkets, high-street retailers, call centres and elsewhere — means long hours, barely-legal wages and unsafe working conditions. Young people fill these jobs.

According to a recent TUC survey, workers between the ages of 16-24 make up nearly a third of the total workforce in hotels and restaurants in the UK (migrant workers and women of all ages are other significant groups in this sector). Young people take these jobs because they are readily available; high staff turnover means employers are almost constantly recruiting. The frequently part-time nature of the work (either at weekends or in the evenings) means that young people at college or university can fit them in around their studies. And the semi-casual nature of the work means that no formal training or qualifications are required; workers can more-or-less start work the day they’re told they’ve got the job.

Clearly, these young workers — in an economically significant and expanding sector, and faced with some of the worst exploitation around — are in dire need of collective organisation. And yet it is often in these sectors and amongst these groups of workers that British trade unions are weakest. The average age of a trade unionist in the UK is still 47.

How should the revolutionary left respond to this situation? Some activists argue that a straightforward “anti-globalisation” perspective is required; if Wal-Mart, Starbucks, Subways, McDonalds, Carphone Warehouses and other retailers weren’t cropping up left, right and centre in our cities then the problem wouldn’t exist. This response is utopian. Even if we could (by demonstration and persuasion alone) “turn the clock back” and eradicate global corporations, would the High Street of the past, of small “family” shops, be free of exploitation? Unlikely. Small and local business are often equally if not more exploitative than bigger employers.

Rather than opposing the expansion of global capitalist corporations in the name of defending local capitalism(s), we should see their expansion as a site for struggle, for fighting exploitation

and, ultimately, building a workers’ movement strong enough to eradicate capitalism altogether.

## The Super Size My Pay campaign was high profile and dynamic and succeeded in organising the first Starbucks strike in history.

In the here and now, revolutionaries need to agitate within the labour movement to force it adopt a serious organising strategy for low pay workplaces.

There are plenty of lessons to be learned from international struggles.

In France, the CGT trade union has had

some success in organising fast-food workers in companies like McDonalds and Pizza Hut. It has led strikes in McDonalds franchises in Paris and Strasbourg, winning victories because it adopted a grassroots organising approach rather than viewing a traditionally anti-union employer like McDonalds with incapacitating trepidation.

“Syndicalist” groups like the IWW can also be learnt from. Although some IWWers talk of building “revolutionary unions” outside of the existing labour movement, and we would not agree with that, they have at least had the courage to attempt to organise workers in workplaces in areas that mainstream trade unions would not touch. They will do things like sending in organisers to get jobs in the areas they’re trying to organise, rather than just turn up outside with suit, mobile

phone, and car as the “traditional” union organiser would.

The experience of the IWW in New York in organising Starbucks workers is one the AWL — through campaigns in which we are involved, such as No Sweat — is trying to build on in the UK. Their successes stem from building unions as fighting bodies. This approach is a million miles away from the mainstream unions’ way of organising — attracting members by being providers of cheap insurance and credit cards.

The most inspiring international example comes from New Zealand, where the Unite union (no relation to the UK union of the same name) ran a “Supersize My Pay” campaign in 2005, focusing on fast-food and coffee-shop workers. The campaign was high-profile and dynamic and succeeded not only in organising the first Starbucks strike in history but also in winning significant wage increases for young workers in Auckland.

What defines this campaign — and campaigns like it — is a spirit of militancy and of building unions as weapons workers can use to fight their bosses. It rejects any notions of “partnership” with the bosses. It overcame the timidity and inertia with which so many UK unions are gripped.

Between 10 and 18 February, AWL members active in No Sweat will be helping build a speaker tour around UK cities featuring Mike Treen, a Unite activist, and Axel Persson, a French CGT activist working for Quick (similar to Wimpy), to discuss how labour movement activists in Britain can replicate at least the spirit if not the precise format of previous campaigns.

Some labour movement bodies in the UK are already taking steps towards this sort of work; in Yorkshire, the TUC Youth Forum and the Regional Young Members’ Activist Committee of the GMB are discussing organising young workers in bar, nightclubs and call-centres. This is positive, but small groups of activists cannot sustain large-scale campaigns. For such campaigning to be successful in the long-term, it needs the organisational infrastructure and collective strength of big unions like the GMB and Unite behind it.

AWL members and other revolutionary activists in the trade union movement must act now to catalyse a currently dormant labour movement into action. We hope the No Sweat week of action, including the speaker tour, can help do that.

• More details: [www.nosweat.org.uk](http://www.nosweat.org.uk)

# Workers organise against immigration controls

BY BECKY CROCKER

A PUBLIC meeting on 10 December 2007 was part of the build-up to the No One Is Illegal Trade Union conference against immigration controls.

Javez Lam from the GMB, who has supported Chinese families following the Morcambe Bay cockle pickers disaster, spoke about organising the Chinese workers in Soho. He said that many migrants come to this country focused on finding a wage and a place to live. He noted with regret that immigration is often not the first thing on their minds, and that this pragmatic approach has left the political debate about immigration in the hands of the racists and the government.

The raids in Soho last October saw immigration officials burst into Soho, arresting 49 Chinese people in one day. Of those, four have been freed, 10 were immediately removed and the rest are still in detention. In response to the raids, the Chinese community invited the head of South East immigration to Soho to explain himself. From 3-5pm, every shop was closed as over 2000 workers went on strike and filled the streets, waving placards to greet the immigration officials, to show the strength of feeling within the community.

Following appeals from Chinese employers that the immigration system was too complex for them to police, the immigration service is now providing training on how to check papers. In the first training session, workers organised to ask awkward questions that would expose the system. By the end, the immigration official was agreeing with them that the system could not be defended and he told them that the Chinese community should organise to change the laws! Someone from No One Is Illegal asked Jai whether this training colludes with the system of immigration controls, but Jai was clear that the workers are using this as an opportunity for resistance. While the training

continues, there will be no more raids, and if the training exposes the system as unworkable, maybe there will be no more raids at all.

In the second half of the meeting, Javier Ruiz from the T&G's Justice for Cleaners campaign spoke about the points-based migration system that will come into effect in March. The new law will sort workers into categories ranging from high-skilled to the Tier 3 lower skilled workers. Employers will have to prove that they have tried to find cheap labour from the native labour pool before importing foreign labour. They will have to register with the government and prove that they are good importers and exporters of migrants before being allowed to police the status of their workers themselves. Each worker from outside the European Union will need a certificate of sponsorship from an employer to enter the country. Once here, there will be measures to make sure that people go back again, such as partly paying workers in their country of origin, or holding bonds for them in their own country.

The importance of the law is that it places responsibility for policing immigration in the hands of the employers. The Trade Unions are in a key place to fight this system as part of their fight against their bosses. The meeting's discussion, however, highlighted that the current union movement is not fit to fight these measures. The laws will come into effect on March 1st. It would be wonderful to think that unions across the country could go on strike to defeat these laws. But the anti-union laws, the lack of understanding about these issues amongst rank and file workers, the reluctance to take any kind of militant action from the unions' leaderships... leads to a depressing picture. But that is why it is important to promote the Trade Unions Against Immigration Controls conference as much as possible amongst rank and file workers. The conference will hopefully not just be a one-off event, but part of a process of organising workers together for this important fight.

## PRISONS

### Prison officer strike ban

IN response to the impact of August 2007's 12-hour strike, Justice Secretary Jack Straw announced plans for a strike-ban for prison officers on January 8. Tabled as an amendment to the Criminal Justice and Immigration Bill, the measure will be discussed in Parliament as *Solidarity* goes to press.

The decision to reintroduce a strike-ban contradicts its repeal in 2005, when David Blunkett replaced an all-out "reserve power" banning striking with a "voluntary" no-strike agreement, due to expire in May 2008. The Prison Officers' Association gave 12 months notice of withdrawal from this agreement in May 2007, and New Labour are clearly attempting to replace it with a renewed ban before then.

Although socialists don't regard prison officers as workers, or the Prisons Officers' Association as a normal trade union, this move is a strengthening of New Labour's anti-trade union laws and should be opposed.

## SHOP WORKERS

### Bonus cuts strike

SHOP workers have been on strike in Berlin (and other parts of Germany) — a number of supermarket chains, department stores, the biggest bookshop chain, and also H&M.

The employers want to abolish the bonuses for late and Sunday shifts — 20% bonus after 6.30pm Monday-Friday, 50% bonus after 8pm, 120% bonus on Sundays and public holidays, 20% bonus on Saturdays after 4.30pm. These bonuses make up a lot on top of the basic pay. When abolished, a full time worker would lose 180 Euro per month (or the equivalent in time).

The union have attempted to hold talks with the employers since January. They refuse. The union are also demanding a 6.5% pay rise (on top of the retention of bonuses).

## SHELTER

### Workers vote for action

TGWU/Unite members in the homelessness charity Shelter have voted by an overwhelming 87% to reject a raft of proposed cuts to pay and conditions, in favour of a strike ballot.

To summarise the worst of what the organisation's management are proposing:

- Immediate downgrading of one third of frontline advice posts by £3,000.
- Removal of pay increments currently worth around £2,500 over three years.
- Extension of the working week from 35 hours to 37.5 hours.
- Introduction of new, disastrous, working practices which would effectively create a two or three-tier workforce of housing advisers doing the same jobs, and leave Shelter as an unprincipled lapdog of the government funding agencies.

Since the first of the proposals were announced in May last year, the union has seen a massive increase in membership and a huge drive to organise, resulting in two massive indicative ballot outcomes, pushing the union further and further towards industrial action to fend off the cuts.

While charities, NGOs and other so-called not-for-profit organisations are not traditionally thought of as particularly useful for left activists to work and organise in, large national charities like Shelter, with its £48m annual turnover and workforce of almost a thousand could buck this trend. The current climate in the voluntary sector is one of increasing managerialism, with a class of self-seeking executives flitting in and out from the private sector to introduce the rot of corrupt, wasteful corporatisation to these organisations and to climb the fat-cat salary ladder to Six Figure City.

With a large number of charities in Britain as big as Shelter or much bigger (Barnados, NSPCC, NCH for example) and the New Labour government looking increasingly to contract with the "third sector" while at the

same time constantly turning the funding screw, we could see workers in more and more of these organisations being forced to mobilise and defend themselves.

We must support Shelter workers in their fight to protect their pay and conditions, and keep a close eye on this sector for signs of further life, as the point where voluntary sector workers start to play a much more significant role in class struggle may not be long away.

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### Equal pay fight

BIRMINGHAM city council has upped the ante in its battle with its staff over equal pay, by seeking to impose new contracts which mean drastic pay cuts thousands of workers and longer hours for thousands more.

The council claims that its goal is equal pay between men and women, but is quite transparently using this as cover for an attack on the workforce. Many women, as well as male, workers will suffer pay cuts if it is successful — some by as much as £6,000 a year. No wonder 70 percent of workers have either formally rejected or decided to ignore their new contracts.

This struggle has been simmering for some time, with 1000-plus rallies outside Birmingham town hall. The council unions, Unite, Unison, GMB and UCATT, will rally again on January 12, supported by council workers from across the UK. If they can win a settlement which guarantees equality while protecting workers' wages, terms and conditions, it will be a big step forward in clarifying the labour movement's current confusion over equal pay. To do that, however, strike action will be necessary.

• Rally to support Birmingham council workers: 12 noon, Saturday 12 January, outside the Council House in Market Square.

## TUC

### Unpaid overtime action

A TUC investigation has found that the number of workers working unpaid overtime increased by over 100,000 in 2007, with the total topping the five million mark.

On average each of these workers loses a staggering £5,000 a year, which means that a total of £25 billion worth of overtime work goes unpaid. To put it another way, five million workers are putting in an average of over seven unpaid hours each week.

The TUC has calculated that if all this overtime came at the start of the year, the first day workers would get paid would be Friday 22 February. It has declared this date 'work your proper hours day', calling on workers to have a proper lunch break and go home on time.

• For more details see [www.workyourprophoursday.com](http://www.workyourprophoursday.com)

## HEALTH

### Karen Reissman campaign

WORKERS in Manchester's Community and Mental Health Services, who struck last year against the victimisation and sacking of their Unison branch chair, SWP member Karen Reissman, have now returned to work — but are building a political campaign for her reinstatement.

On 11 December the branch unanimously carried a motion advocating a campaign including a Unison delegation to Health Secretary Alan Johnson, pressure on Unison-sponsored MPs and a one day strike on 5 February so that the whole branch can attend a lobby of Parliament in London.

As the motion puts it: "This raises issues of national significance relating to trade union rights, the right of freedom of expression and the defence of the NHS." This is a crucial struggle. Please get your branch or other organisation to support it — visit [www.reinstate-karen.org](http://www.reinstate-karen.org) to find out more.

• For the full text of the resolution, see [www.workersliberty.org/node/9733](http://www.workersliberty.org/node/9733)

**UNDER ATTACK FROM IMMIGRATION CONTROLS!  
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**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION E-MAIL [DAVIDLANDAU9@AOL.COM](mailto:DAVIDLANDAU9@AOL.COM)**

# Resist the 3-year public sector pay cut!

BY COLIN FOSTER

**I**N 2008, public sector workers across the board face three years of real wage cuts. The Government is determined to limit public sector pay rises to around 2%, and wants to clamp that limit in to three-year deals, while inflation (RPI) is still running at 4.2%. How can public sector workers reinvigorate the idea of trade-union solidarity across different trades and unions on this issue?

The public services union Unison estimates that since April 2004 the accrued increase in local government pay stands at 11.4%. Over the same period prices have risen by 12.5%, and average earnings across the whole economy by 13.4%.

Local government can not be untypical of the public sector. Now the Government wants to set the wage loss in stone by insisting on three-year deals — at a low rate — for local government and health, and civil service sectors, this year. In local government and health, a wish from the employers for three-year deals was already flagged up in 2007. In the explanations from Unison union leaders about why they support the “Public Review Body” for health workers, that Body is supposed to have the virtue of being “independent”; but now it has been told by the Treasury to deliver a three year formula.

On Sunday 16 December AWL members from different public sector unions discussed strategy. This is a summary of conclusions, subject to corrections, amendments, and additions. It has been updated with new information received since 16 December.

Our first conclusion is that we should not get buried in the details and limits of feasible string-pulling to elicit action from the different public sector unions. The AWL’s primary task is (as Marx put it) “*in the various stages of development which the struggle of working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through... always and everywhere to represent the interests of the movement as a whole... to point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat independently of all nationality...*” — rather than to pull strings on which we (as yet a relatively small organisation) do not have much pulling power anyway.

## Basic, unifying, long-term demands

**D**IFFERENT sections of the public sector have different pay structures, different negotiating systems, different detailed concerns. That sort of “sectionalism” is inherent to wage-bargaining under capitalism. It can be mitigated, but not abolished at will. As Karl Marx put it: “*The cry for an equality of wages rests... upon a mistake, is an insane wish never to be fulfilled...*”

In the AWL conference document of 2006, we concluded that: “*Each AWL fraction should make sure it is visible in its union and sector as the advocate of... a class line, which in the present situation revolves around two main themes, levelling up pay and conditions and organising the unorganised.*”

In the public sector we should argue for coordination beyond practical things like dates of ballots. The basic touchstone should be a campaign for above inflation pay rises across the sector (i.e. a “sliding scale of wages” agreement) and an agreed minimum wage.

We have to politically rearm as well as help to reorganise and renew the trade union movement. We argue for standardised pay rises matching and beating inflation, against both regional bargaining and “performance-related pay”.

We also argue for unions to work for a common settlement date across the public

sector, and against multi-year deals which ensure that only a fraction of workers can move each year, so that the full strength of the unions is deployed together. At present the Treasury gives its remit for civil service pay, its budgets for health and local government, etc., in a coordinated way each year, but the

unions fight (or don’t fight) separately.

At present, even within Unison, health and local government pay both run from April to March, but the two sections don’t put claims in at the same time, and they don’t give the Government and employers a common timescale to respond.

Civil service bargaining units differ — there are 241 of them. Most settlement dates are between April and August. Many have multi-year deals, on different cycles. Teachers are September (it used to be April, but shifted a few years back). Further education is July.

One of the ideas that AWL activists have

## Teachers closest to action

**T**HE pay review body (STRB) sent to the Government on 26 October its recommendation on a pay settlement to run for three years from September 2008. (The three-year term was already in place before the Government’s recent announcement). The Government, unusually, has taken a long time about responding.

Theoretically the Government can accept the STRB recommendation or pay more or pay less. According to NUT general secretary Steve Sinnott, speaking at an NUT Divisional Secretaries’ meeting on 9 January, the Government has to go public on the report by the end of January at latest.

The EIS (Scottish teachers’ union) has accepted a three year deal of 2.5%, 2.5%, 2.3%. Teachers in England will almost certainly be offered less.

NUT Executive policy is to ballot for discontinuous strike action if the Government does not grant an increase catching up with inflation. The left won a narrow majority, on the Executive, against general secretary Steve Sinnott, to make it “discontinuous action” rather than a single one-day strike.

Sinnott had pencilled in 30 January for a

one-day strike. After the Government’s delay, any action will certainly be later than that.

If the NUT Executive sticks to its policy as discussed up to now, then the NUT will ballot for action. The earliest possible action will be late February, after half-term, which is around the second week of February.

There is still, of course, a danger that the right will oppose action when it comes to the crunch, or that Sinnott will limit the action to a one-off one-day protest. AWL will press for it to be discontinuous action, and at as quick a tempo as possible. That might mean two strikes before the end of term (just before Easter), and further strikes from April.

NUT activists say:

- *The union has done a lot of campaigning in the schools on pay;*
- *Teachers in the schools are more agitated about workload issues than about pay, but will probably respond to the chance to express a national protest by strike action over pay;*
- *It would not make sense to delay NUT action in 2008 in order to increase the chances of coinciding with other sectors. If the pay settlement announced by the*

*Government is allowed by delay to come to appear an “accomplished fact”, that will undermine mobilisation.*

NUT pay policy is for an increase of 10% or £3000, plus reduction of differentials through such things as establishing a “single spine” for the pay structure. It is not clear what the exact demand will be over which members may be balloted for strike action. The demand is on the Government as the body which decides teachers’ pay, although there exists no procedure for the union to negotiate with the Government over pay.

NUT conference is at Easter (weekend of 23 March). Motions have already been submitted from branches. In January branches vote on which motions to prioritise, i.e. get to the actual conference floor. Then in February they consider amendments to the prioritised motions.

Because of this schedule it is common practice to submit “holding motions”, with the sharp edges of their content being supplied by subsequent amendments. There is a holding motion from the left with (oddly) a call for a ballot on action over pay “before Christmas 2008”; obviously it will have to be amended.

raised within PCS is that the union should seek disputes over the Treasury remit, i.e. the overall guidance the Treasury gives to the 241 bargaining units. Why not extend that idea outside the civil service? Of course, we are not strong enough to win it this year, but we will never be strong enough to win unless we start arguing for it sometime.

Of course, any general theme we argue isn't going to supersede the actual union claims, which in most cases other than for local government are already in. But, in the background of what we say about on specific deals, we have an overarching commitment to levelling up wages and conditions - including for the "private sector" workers within the public sector, that is, contracted-out workers such as ancillaries, cleaners, and so on, who are often a lot worse off than public sector workers.

*So: sliding scale; minimum of £8 an hour; bring contracted-out workers onto public-sector pay and conditions; common settlement dates; no multi-year deals.*

## Fight now! Don't wait!

**I**N 2007, AWL put much emphasis on organising local public-sector union solidarity committees, where possible through Trades Councils.

Rebuilding and reviving Trades Councils is a key task. But we would deceive ourselves if we suggest that local solidarity committees are the key lever to get coordinated union action in 2008.

We cannot rely on the national union leaders to coordinate action. The experience of 2007 shows that, however much they talk about it, they are reluctant to do anything to bring it about. In their discourse, coordinated action remains a good idea for an ideal future moment unlikely to arrive — and sometimes, an excuse for not doing anything now, short of that ideal future.

The *Observer* of 16.12.07 reported: "The TUC will launch Speak Up for Public Services in London on Tuesday to campaign against the government's target of 2 per cent pay rises across the public sector, resulting in pay increases below inflation for hundreds of thousands of workers". It reads well, but in reality this an ongoing campaign which had a lobby of parliament last January. The TUC website gives no indication of any further action, or indeed of any campaigning beyond bland press releases.

Thus we want rank-and-file link-ups across unions and sectors to put pressure on the leaders and to mobilise independently.

But there is a Catch-22 here. In anything like current circumstances, even modestly lively local solidarity committees, like the one in Leeds this autumn, will draw in workers outside the diehard left only when there are signals of ferment or activity over pay in those workers' unions. In other words, for local rank-and-file link-ups to gain life there has to be already at least some ferment in a number of different sectors, roughly simultaneous if not actually coordinated.

It is not possible to get that ferment by first forming the cross-union local committees. The call for local solidarity committees will "go live" when there is that more-or-less simultaneous ferment.

Coldly considered, as one PCS activist put it, the tasks of fighting for coordinated union action on public sector pay in 2008 are "incredibly difficult". The strongest section of public sector workers, the postal workers, have been taken out by a (bad) multi-year deal: the unions generally are in a worse shape after the setbacks of 2007.

Nevertheless, there are some openings and signs of life; and in any case, it is our task to develop and argue a political line which — even if it can't win a majority, even if we calculate in advance that it has no chance of winning a majority — can educate those workers we can reach in a class approach.

## Further education

**T**HE lecturers' union UCU is advocating common action with the NUT. UCU reports: "Branches are now preparing for a national ballot of FE members on taking industrial action... The intention at this stage is to look to ballot members in January to reject the pay offer and take industrial action in the following month.

"It is hoped that this will coincide with a NUT ballot".

That applies to England; Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland have different negotiating structures. The other complication is that, according to UCU: "The Association of Colleges (AoC)... negotiates with UCU and other recognised trade unions to produce recommendations on pay and conditions for individual colleges to adopt... Pay can vary considerably between colleges".

"In summary, the AoC's final pay recommendation is:

- 2% on all salaries and allowances from 1 August 2007
- A further 1% from 1 February 2008.

"A national conference of FE branch representatives from across the country, held in October 2007, said that the offer was 'insulting', and amounts to a pay cut".

According to UCU insiders, on candid assessment the UCU's position is weak. The AoC formula has already been imposed by many colleges; union organisation in the colleges is weak; the top union officials do not want action.

Again, one AWL member working in Further Education reports that her college management usually takes the AoC's figure as a "maximum" for pay in the college. The pay settlement date in the college has been shifted to 1 January, and the college bosses' line this year is that they won't even consider making any offer at all — still less the full AoC figure which UCU has called "insulting" — until the end of January.

However, a ballot and action alongside the NUT could get a significantly better turnout than action by the UCU on its own.

In Higher Education UCU has accepted a

**Unison leaders have promised a faster tempo on pay in 2008, for both health and local government. It remains to be seen whether they will deliver.**

settlement for 2006-9.

## Civil service

**N**EXT up is the civil service. AWL activists in the PCS suggest that if school teachers do go ahead with discontinuous action, and even more so if further education lecturers go with them, that will create a basis for arguing in the PCS for the union's campaign for "national pay" — i.e. for levelling up to common rates across the civil service's 241 different pay bargaining units - to be refreshed or resurrected.

AWL members in the PCS have won policy at PCS conferences that the union should take action over the "Treasury remit" - the budget envelope which the Treasury gives each February as guidance to all civil service bargaining for the coming financial year. The union has not done that.

AWL PCS activists suggest that the tactic for 2008 might be, if the teachers take discontinuous action, to press for PCS to revive or resuscitate its national campaign by action alongside the teachers. The demand of the action would be for national pay bargaining, national pay rates, harmonisation to those rates within three to five years, and increases at least matching inflation for all workers. It would be understood that the immediate concession that might be won on this would be an increase in the "Treasury remit" to allow movement towards those objectives.

PCS conference is 19-23 May, in Brighton. Branches must submit motions by 6 March. PCS has no provision for branches amending motions.

Issues which need to be raised at the conference include union action to secure common settlement dates for different bargaining units and opposition to multi-year deals.

The different pay bargaining units in the civil service have different settlement dates and different spans of multi-year deals.

The Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), the most militant section in the "civil service", is somewhat "out of it" for

2008, since it has had a three-year pay deal imposed in November 2007 (backdated to 1 July).

DWP workers struck on 6/7 December against that imposition. No further action has yet been announced beyond an overtime ban from 8 to 21 December, but it is possible. The union's official stance now is:

"PCS has demanded that management withdraw the second and third years of the 3 year offer and commence immediate negotiations on making the offer acceptable.

"PCS urges management to take up the offer of talks offered by ACAS".

The biggest pay settlement within the civil service to come up in 2008 is in Revenue and Customs (HMRC). A three-year pay settlement there ends in June 2008, and a new settlement is due from 1 July. HMRC workers have the highest union density in the civil service, and (unlike some other sectors of the civil service) sizeable economic clout.

PCS is balloting between 7 and 23 January for strike action in HMRC — not over pay, but over jobs, and specifically over closures of rural offices. If HMRC workers strike, it will probably be on 31 January, a date chosen as the busiest day of the tax year.

Last year PCS called two one-day strikes, on 31 January and 1 May, over jobs but also for national pay. However, after 1 May the Exec went for a lengthy "consultation exercise", and then for a further "consultative ballot". Once the ballot returned a clear majority for further national action, the Exec (on 1 November) suspended all such action on the grounds that the Government was allegedly showing some signs of movement in negotiations.

However, since Left Unity won control of the PCS Exec in 2003, pay inequalities in the civil service have increased, and the number of different bargaining units has increased.

A new approach is needed to reverse that trend.

## Health

**U**NISON Health has submitted a claim for the next settlement, due in April, for:

- scrapping Band 1 (the lowest pay band);
- an "above inflation" pay rise for all;
- a cut in working hours from 37.5 to 35.

The pay rates are set by an official Pay Review Body which will report in February.

The Government can then decide on a settlement higher or lower than the PRB recommendation. In 2007 the Government decided to "stage" the PRB's 2.5% recommendation, i.e., in effect, to reduce it to 1.9%.

There was a debate at last year's Unison Health conference about the PRB. We argued for Unison to support collective bargaining for all health workers, but the conference decision was for all health workers to be brought under the PRB.

Unison leaders have promised a faster tempo on pay in 2008, for both health and local government. It remains to be seen whether they will deliver.

The health Pay Review Body is due to report in February. We need motions from Unison branches to the Unison Health Service Group Executive as soon as PRB reports, insisting that the union make demands on the Government to vary the award upwards and to reject a multi-year formula.

The top Unison officials have made it clear that they will want to "respect the integrity of the PRB", i.e. accept any Pay Review Board finding straight away, if only the Government will pay it in full. But it is already clear from the Government's general policy, and from the Government's NHS Budget plans, that the Government will not willingly pay more than about 2%, and will instruct the PRB to propose and three-year deal.

Unison health conference comes soon after, 14-16 April. There is a left-wing motion on pay in from the East Midlands, demanding an uplift of bottom pay rates, etc. rather than a plea for the "independence" of the PRB; a call on the Government to overrule PRB and uplift higher; and demanding the Service Group Executive ballot for industrial action in support of this dispute. The motion sets a deadline of June for moving to industrial action.

The motions will be circulated early in January, and amendments have to be in by 15 February.

The question of deadlines and tempo is important because in 2007, talks on both health and local government pay dragged on for months after the settlement date in April, despite the Government making it clear that it would talk about only minute marginal adjustments.

Ballots were held in the autumn: health workers accepted the Government deal, and local government workers voted against strike action on their offer, largely because many workers preferred to get money in their pockets immediately, from the back-dated element of even a poor pay rise, rather than get nothing immediately and stick out for what the union leadership told them was only a slight chance of a slightly better deal later.

Despite that, many health workers are reported to be dissatisfied and angry with the pay deal, even if they voted for it.

There is also the question of agitating and organising among ancillary (contracted-out) workers for them to be lifted up to NHS pay rates.

There is a "framework agreement" nationally which says that some contracted-out staff should get NHS rates. But it is not an enforceable agreement. NHS Trusts have to volunteer the money to contractors to uplift the pay.

AWL activists in Unison in have succeeded in getting the Trust to pay part of the deal, but not as fast as it should be. The Union branch has recruited well out of it. Some other places (Aintree, East London) have had strikes and won the full deal. Many have done nothing.

The problem is that the setup now requires local Unison branches to run local campaigns on this issue, and many branches are simply not up to it - because of lack of activists, or because of lack of interest in the conditions of the contracted-out workers.

Despite ancillary workers having been generally the backbone of NUPE organisation in the Health Service before the merger that formed Unison, the union has waged no systematic campaign to organise and win improvements for the ancillary workers.

We should argue for Unison to campaign for an enforceable national agreement to get contracted-out workers NHS rates, and to launch an organising drive among contracted-out workers on that basis.

## Local government

**T**HE relevant Unison committee has proposed a claim (from April 2008) for a 6% increase, with a minimum wage of £6.75 per hour. The committee is due to finalise the claim in January.

Unison local government conference is 15-16 June, and the deadline for motions to it is 22 February. The amendments deadline is by April, but there is no need to wait that long to know that the Government will not willingly offer more than about 2%. The Government has already set its local government budget for 2008-9.

We need motions that mandate Unison to ballot immediately then (in June, i.e. on the same deadline as we are proposing for health) if there is no satisfactory settlement by then.

A significant warning to local government workers about the intentions of Unison officialdom comes from the probation sector. Unison members in probation are part of the local government "service group" of the union, although their pay is entirely separate, negotiated by Unison and Napo (the probation officers' union) more or less directly with the Treasury. They have just come out of a three year pay deal, and a claim is now due for April 2008.

In November there was a national activists' forum, the first in five years, where pay was discussed.

The union full timer argued strongly for a pitiful claim and another three-year deal.

An AWL activist presented argued that co-ordinated action should be the priority, and for that reason the union should only consider a one year pay deal.

The full-timer confused people (apparently successfully) by talking about co-ordinated action whilst actually advocating going for a three year deal which would be negotiated very soon i.e. taking the section out of any

# France: a draw in the first round

Following the upsurge of action by French railworkers, students and others in October and November last year, a group of young AWL members and contacts visited the city for three days in December. We joined up with two Workers' Liberty members who are currently teaching in Paris as part of their university course. As well as learning about the ongoing struggle, we revived our ties with sections of the French revolutionary left. In the process we gained valuable ideas about the way forward for socialist activists in Britain. Sacha Ismail reports.

By the standards of Britain, at least, the class struggle in France is at a high pitch. Following his election last year, conservative president Nicholas Sarkozy immediately went on an offensive against the unions, with anti-strike laws for "essential services" such as public transport and attacks on the pension rights of the relatively small number of workers who retain a "special regime". (In 1993, private sector workers suffered a major cut in pensions provision; in 95 a huge wave of strikes prevented the extension of this attack to the public sector, but between then and the defeat of further strikes in 2003, the ruling class gradually got most of what it wanted, but some workers were exempt.)

Both these struggles have pitched the railworkers, one of the best organised sections of the French working class, to the forefront. Several of the socialists we spoke to stressed that, in take on the railworkers, Sarkozy's government has a dual purpose. The first is to open the door to a further series of generalised attacks on pensions and other social rights (one comrade used the analogy of the special regimes being a small plug preventing a mass of water rushing through); but the second is to confront and break one of the vanguards of the French working class.

In October and November, railworkers, gasworkers and others carried out major strikes and demonstrations, using General Assemblies (AGs) to organise the struggle. There have also been strikes by teachers, civil servants and other groups of workers under attack. The background is the events of 2006, in which mass student and school student occupations and AGs, backed by a rising tide of workers' action, forced the withdrawal of the CPE, a deeply unpopular attack on young workers' rights. This time too, the student movement has clashed with the government, though their struggle is a different one: opposition to the government University Reform Law (LRU), which moves French universities further down the road towards privatisation.

While very impressive indeed, both workers' and students' actions have been relatively weak compared to the CPE struggle. In the case of the students, only a minority of universities and a few schools have taken action, compared to the great majority of universities and a large and growing number of schools in 2006. Meanwhile, while there is mass support for the railworkers and others striking to defend the special regimes, the strikes have not burst the bounds of sectoralism and union legality in the way they did last time.

A bit of explanation about the French labour movement. In France, only a small minority of workers are in a union (currently 9%); workers only join if they want to be activists. The unions

represent both members and non-members, and many non-members will take strike action. At the same time, there is more of a tradition of minority strikes, and of workers taking action and organising independently of their union leadership. In 1986, for instance, a three week rail strike took place (and won) completely independently of the rail section of the CGT (France's main union federation). There are obvious disadvantages here, but it is undoubtedly easier for workers' to take and escalate action even if their union bureaucracy is hostile.

Easier — but the pressure and inertia of the bureaucracy still plays a role. In the 2006 struggle, all the major unions, the national student union UNEF and the leadership of the Communist and Socialist Parties demanded — sluggishly, hypocritically, but nonetheless — the withdrawal of the CPE. That provided a framework in which workers and students felt confident to take action: an inadequate framework for going further to challenge and overthrow the government, but a framework. This time, in contrast, the CGT, UNEF and especially the Socialist Party range from unclear to downright treacherous and in league with Sarkozy. As a result, it has been more difficult for action to snowball.

By the time we visited France, the unions were in negotiations and action (both among workers and students) was fizzling out for the time being. While we were there, national rail and Paris Metro strikes took place, but because most workers regarded these as token actions manipulated by the union leaderships to support negotiations, and not as a serious blows against the employers and government, they were poorly supported. Meanwhile, most of the university occupations had dispersed for the holidays. One French comrade described it as the end of the first round and a draw — but one which could have been a victory if not for the actions of the union leaders.

We did visit one of the last occupied campuses in Paris, and participated in a thousand-strong student demonstration. Of necessity, however, most of our activity involved discussions with individuals and groups of activists.

We met with a number of activists from the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire, including youth from its left-wing Democratic Révolutionnaire tendency, two members of its political bureau (one from DR and one from its leading majority) and a small group railworkers

Scenes from last December's protests against Sarkozy's plans

British workers is a crucial task for socialists in the period ahead.

2. One reason why the French working class has better maintained its fighting capacity is the presence of relatively large numbers of socialists in its ranks. Example: the LCR comrades who we spoke to said that there are something like 300 organised revolutionary socialist railworkers in France, including more than 100 in the LCR (LO has a strong base in many industrial sector, including on the rail). The equivalent figure in Britain cannot be more than 30! The same is true among many groups of workers and among students. The LCR's youth section, JCR, has three hundred activists in universities and several dozen in schools, something which no group in Britain can hope to match.

This implantation is a material factor in the strength of the French working class. The French left has established it by a patient orientation to workplace and union struggles, and by a willingness to reach out beyond the existing structures of trade and student unions (in part, admittedly, because both, particularly student unions, are much weaker in France than in Britain). This helps to establish a virtuous circle: during the current struggle, the LCR's profile has meant a steady stream of membership applications from railworkers.

3. The French left is in ferment. Since the 2002 presidential election, the LCR has grown rapidly, particularly among young people, probably doubling its size. In the 2007 election, its candidate, the now very famous Olivier Besancenot, received more than two million votes, many times more than the candidate of the Communist Party. The LCR now has a relationship with many thousands of activists who want to fight the bosses and their government, and recognition from many tens and hundreds of thousands more.

This is, obviously, very different from the situation in Britain: but that is because the French left has made different choices. The LCR (and, previously, LO) have grown not through Respect-style opportunism and stunts, but by a basic focus on ideas of class struggle and workers' representation.

THE LCR is currently making propaganda and attempting to launch a campaign for a new "anti-capitalist" workers' party — and, while there is much to criticise in and many questions to ask about all this, it is very different from the foul populist swamp into which the British far left has collapsed. (When I asked a leading LCR member for his view on championing of George Galloway by their sister organisation the ISG he was obviously embarrassed.) The new party project may not succeed, not least because the majority of Lutte Ouvrière is taking a sectarian attitude towards the LCR's appeal (the LO minority, in contrast, are, cautiously but definitely positive). But at least the LCR, or some within it, are posing the right questions.

• We had a great time in Paris, and plan to return some time in early 2008. If you would like to come on our next delegation to France, get in touch: sachaworkersliberty.org

## Class struggles in France

London AWL meeting

Thursday 24 January, 7.30pm

The Union Tavern, 52 Lloyd Baker Street (corner with Farringdon Road), London (Kings X or Farringdon Tube)

Come and hear a report back from the delegation of young AWL members who visited France last month, and discuss how we can support and what we can learn from the French workers' movement and left.

# Yes, independence for Kosova!

BY COLIN FOSTER

**K**OSOVA, formerly the Albanian-majority province of Yugoslavia, is likely to declare independence in February 2008. The European Union, the USA, and NATO will support independence, despite Russia (a longstanding ally of Serbia) blocking UN approval for independence and declaring that independence will be "outside international law".

That the people of Kosova should have their right to independence respected is good, and a damning condemnation of those on the left who backed Milosevic in the 1990s. Many things about the way independence is happening are bad.

Kosova was, in effect, a colony of Serbia from when it was conquered from the decaying Ottoman Empire in 1912 — in a bloody campaign that moved Leon Trotsky, then a war correspondent in the region, to denounce "Serbian imperialism" — until 1999.

Kosova was occupied by Italian and then by German forces during World War Two, but reconquered by Serbia at the end of the war. It is the one province of the old Yugoslavia for which there is no evidence of the people ever having in their majority wished for, or at least accepted, inclusion in the federal state. Its population is about 90% Albanian.

Despite Tito's Yugoslavia engaging in serious talks with Turkey in the 1950s about "serbianising" Kosova by way of deporting the Albanian-Muslim population en masse to Turkey, Kosova enjoyed a relatively benign era from 1974 to 1989, with great autonomy within the Yugoslav federation.

In 1989, Kosova's autonomy was suppressed by the new Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic, who had risen to prominence in 1987 on a platform of Serbian chauvinism directed specially against Kosova.

In the 1990s Milosevic's chauvinism led to the break-up of Yugoslavia as Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia successively broke away from Belgrade rule. In Croatia and Bosnia there were bloody wars.

Meanwhile there was a Serbian rule of terror in Kosova. The Albanian population had to improvise a whole structure of underground schools, hospitals, and so on.

In March 1999 the big powers, nervous that Belgrade's heavy-handedness would spark uncontrollable conflict in the whole region, pressed Milosevic for an agreement to restore Kosova's autonomy (the Rambouillet agreement).

Milosevic refused. The NATO powers which had, in the name of stability, condoned Milosevic's oppression for the previous ten years, responded by bombing Serbia from 24 March to 10 June 1999. (A much shorter NATO bombing campaign in September 1995 had forced Serbia into agreeing to negotiations on Bosnia which ended the war there: it seems that NATO hoped for something equally easy over Kosova). In response, Milosevic dramatically stepped up his drive to "secure" Kosova by massacring or driving out the Albanian population.

Serbian forces killed at least 6000 Kosovars; in 1998 and the first half of 1999, over 1.5 million Kosovar Albanians, maybe 90% of the total population, were driven from their homes.

According to Human Rights Watch, the NATO bombing killed about 500 civilians. Eventually, Milosevic backed down and withdrew Serbian troops from Kosova. Since 1999 the province has been under UN administration, though elements of Kosovar political institutions have been gradually introduced.

On 17 November, the party of Hashim Thaci, former leader of the Kosova Liberation Army, a guerrilla force that fought Milosevic, won Kosova's elections. That has put pressure on the big powers to move rapidly. Former Finnish president Martti Ahtisaari had submitted a report to the UN in March 2007 recommending independence.

Short of Kosova being ruled by the UN forever, or what would be an extremely



*Kosovar refugees in Bosnia at the time of the Balkan wars*

bloody attempt by Serbia to restore its rule, there is no alternative to independence. Marxists who support the right of nations to self-determination must regret that independence did not come earlier; and that, coming so late, it comes in such poisoned form.

Oppression does not make nations "good", or guarantee that oppressed nations cannot become oppressors. There are no "good" and "bad" nations. On the contrary, the most justified, the most heroic, of struggles for national self-determination often go together with discrimination against or persecution of minorities within the territory of the oppressed nation. When Turkey won independence in the early 1920s, Turkish forces drove out the whole Greek population of Smyrna (now Izmir), maybe half a million people. After Cyprus won independence from Britain in 1960, the Greek majority on the island discriminated against the Turkish minority.

That the Albanian majority in Kosova has treated the Serbian minority — and, even more, the smaller Roma minority — badly since 1999 is therefore no surprise. Between June and October 1999, almost all the 50,000 Serbs then living in Kosova's capital Pristina were forced to leave.

What is particularly poisonous is that, despite Kosova's development being supervised by big powers explicitly committed to safeguarding minority rights, and despite those powers pushing through anti-discrimination legislation which the Minority Rights Group describes as being on paper the best in Europe, the persecution of minorities has only hardened and become more institutionalised since 1999.

According to a Minority Rights Group report, communal segregation is worse in Kosova than anywhere else in Europe. The Serbian and Albanian communities not only have separate education systems — as they did before 1999, of course, the Albanian system being "underground" — they also have separate health systems. That started when the management of a hospital in the Serbian-majority area of Mitrovica stated in 1999 that they would have no Albanians in the hospital, and has escalated since then.

Kosovar Albanian chauvinists carried out "ethnic cleansing" of Serbs and Roma from many areas in 2004.

Without the international supervision, it is of course possible that after June 1999 the Kosovar Albanians would have tried to drive out their Serbian minority in an exact inversion of what Milosevic had done to them. If sparks of democratic scruple, or just fear of reprisals from Belgrade, had restrained them in the heat of that moment, then there is a seri-

ous chance that calm reflection and considerations of practicality would have encouraged the development of some *modus vivendi* in the following years, with no doubt significant disadvantage for the Serbian minority but something less vile than the current segregation.

Arguably, the international supervision has made the discrimination even worse than it would otherwise have been. The Minority Rights Group reports that the UN administration's response to complaints of disadvantage from one community or another has generally been to "throw money at the problem". For the big powers involved, of course, the sums required to swamp Kosova in international aid are small change. So, Serbs can't get treatment at "Albanian" hospitals? Easy answer: build a "Serbian" hospital. In practice, there are no penalties and no risks of backlash for Kosovar Albanians treating Serbs badly — nor even for Serbs treating Albanians badly, as they still do, in the small patches of Kosova where Serbs are still a majority — and there is every incentive for both communities being as militantly "communalist" as possible in order to tilt the international supervisors their way.

However, things are as they are. The Kosovars are likely to get their national self-determination, under tense conditions, and with supervision by and protection from the European Union. The persecution of minorities in Kosova should make us speak up for the rights of those minorities. If the population of Mitrovica, the area of northern Kosova bordering on Serbia where most Kosova Serbs live, raises the demand to secede to Serbia (which it hasn't, as far as I know) it should have the right to do so. But the persecution of minorities cannot make us deny the right to self-determination of the Kosovars any more than that of any other nation.

**H**OWEVER, *Socialist Worker* has denounced Kosovar independence. In an SW of 22 December 2007, Alex Callinicos declares: "Kosova is a province of Serbia". Serbian law, and Serbia's "right of conquest", rank higher for him than national rights! He denounces the US and the EU for "rushing to back a regime run by nationalist gangsters whose independence may destabilise a region that was torn apart by war less than a decade ago".

In 1999, the SWP gave 100% backing to Serbia against Kosova, by clamouring to "stop the [NATO] bombing". It made it clear that it did not want the bombing to be stopped — as eventually it was stopped — by Serbia withdrawing its army from Kosova. No, that would

amount to success for "imperialism". The bombing must be stopped with Serbian troops still in place and free to continue their "ethnic cleansing". The SWP was vehement even against weaker-stomached NATO-phobes who urged that the "stop the bombing" slogan be coupled with a call for self-determination for the Kosovars.

How the Kosovars could have self-determination with the Serbian troops rampaging across their country, the weaker-stomached never explained. By the Serbian people rising up against Milosevic? But that was not going to happen in the same timescale (weeks and days) in which the Kosovar Albanian population was being "ethnically cleansed", and it happened, in fact, only as a consequence of Serbia's defeat in 1999. (Milosevic fell from power, after waves of popular revolt, in October 2000). In any case, the SWP was having none of such equivocation.

Kosovar self-determination would "destabilise the region", the SWP said, in a plea for bourgeois stability somewhat incongruous from such devout "anti-imperialists". Besides, the Kosovars, or their leadership, were "nationalist gangsters" (as Callinicos still puts it: other nations have national rights, despite unattractive leaderships, but the Kosovars only have "gangsters"); and the Kosovars were so dispersed that self-determination was now impossible.

Milosevic was at fault? Maybe a tad, said the SWP. But we must remember, they insisted again and again, that Milosevic was "not as bad as Hitler". So that's all right, then?

The backlash argument was that anyone who failed to join the SWP's "stop the bombing" movement was "pro-imperialist" or "pro-war". If the SWP's line was for NATO to stop the bombing leaving Serbian troops in possession of Kosova, that might be "anti" NATO's war, but it was certainly "pro" Serbia's genocidal war against the Kosovars. The SWP's line was "anti" NATO imperialism, but "pro" Serbian imperialism (as Trotsky had called it 87 years earlier).

Apart from the pro-Islamist slant (dating from 2002: before that, the Muslim Kosovars and Bosniacs were "nationalist gangsters"), all the elements of the SWP's current "reactionary anti-imperialism" were thoroughly rehearsed in its agitation over Kosova.

The line of the AWL was not "pro-imperialist" or "pro-war", but one of advocating consistent democracy.

*"We say that the axial issue is Kosova! The Kosovars have the right to make any alliance they can get, with NATO or with the devil, to save themselves from destruction! But the left does not have to and should not follow them and mimic them."*

*The left should not extend political credence and credit to NATO. We cannot do anything other than condemn Milosevic and want his defeat. Such defeat will not lead to the subjugation of the Serbs: Milosevic's victory will lead to the annihilation of the Kosovars. That alone is enough to determine our attitude...*

*To say stop bombing now, without demanding Yugoslavian (Serbian) troops out of Kosova, the arming of the Kosovars, and independence for Kosova, is to give up on the Kosovars. If bombing stops will the ethnic cleansing stop? The opposite is likely to be true - it will escalate. We say arm the Kosovars! Nobody should trust NATO politicians, or NATO bombs and troops...*" (*Workers' Liberty* 55).

Today we say the same. The national rights of the Kosovars are paramount. That does not mean that we follow or mimic the politics of the Kosovars' leaders: we denounce their anti-Serb chauvinism. We do not extend political credence and credit to NATO: we look at the eight years of big-power control over Kosovar with a hostile eye. We are absolutely opposed to the efforts by Serbia and its ally Russia to stall Kosova's independence.

#### Links:

[www.workersliberty.org.uk/files/kosova.pdf](http://www.workersliberty.org.uk/files/kosova.pdf)  
 Dossier on Kosova in *Workers' Liberty*  
[www.workersliberty.org.uk/files/kosovaintro.pdf](http://www.workersliberty.org.uk/files/kosovaintro.pdf)  
 Introduction to that dossier

# Iraq: a quiet patch in the nightmare

BY MARTIN THOMAS

**I**N my last summary article on Iraq (*Solidarity* 3/117, 13/09/07) I wrote that the Bush "administration now seems to have no strategy but to bash on and hope it can keep things relatively under control until it hands over the mess to another US presidency in January 2009".

And I suggest that it might achieve that limited objective. "The tighter division of Arab Iraq into Shia-only or Sunni-only neighbourhoods — now separated off, in Baghdad, by high concrete walls and checkpoints — should tend to reduce the number of killings".

It has done so. The rate of killings remained high through to September, but two heavy-weight US reports published in December — the Pentagon's *Measuring Security and Stability in Iraq*, and the Brookings Institution's *Iraq Index* — detail a drop in violent deaths in October-December down to about the same level as before the Samarra mosque bombing of February 2006 set off slow-burning sectarian civil war.

The lower level is still horrifying: about 600 deaths a month according to the Pentagon, which almost certainly underestimates. The Brookings report tells us, for example, that 79% of people in Baghdad have had a family member or friend murdered or kidnapped; and that Iraq now has less than half the number of doctors it had before 2003, 17,000 having fled the country and 2,000 having been murdered.

Conditions are nightmarish; but it is a quieter patch in the nightmare.

What does this mean socially? The Pentagon report, which no-one can suspect of painting the situation worse than it is, says bluntly that there have been only "minimal advances in the delivery of essential services to the people of Iraq" like electricity and water, and that a major limiting factor is endemic sectarianism in the Iraqi government.

The Pentagon report ventures no guess about whether unemployment — generally reckoned around 50% — is decreasing, and Brookings reports it unchanged.

And what does it mean politically? Both the Pentagon nor the Brookings report see little or no advance in the Iraqi government's ability to build a broad political base or to provide efficient civil administration. Their evidence is in line with the summary judgement of Joos Hillermann of the International Crisis Group think-tank.

"What Petraeus [the current US military commander] has accomplished is a lull that is sustainable through the American elections [in November 2008]. It's not indefinitely sustainable without political accommodation at the top".

The failure of prime minister Nouri al-Maliki to build a governing alliance of any strength has been highlighted in events of the last few days. Powerful Shia politicians are seeking to get parliamentary immunity removed from Adnan Dulaimi, a leader of the Iraqi Accord Front, so

that criminal charges can be brought against him for organising a murder gang with "mortar shells, grenade launchers and other weapons" stored in a house next to his home and allegedly used by his guards. Dulaimi denies responsibility for the house.

The Accord Front is a "soft"-Islamist bloc including the Iraqi offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood which, of all the Sunni Arab political forces, has on the whole been the most willing to cooperate with the political structures set up by the USA since the 2003 invasion.

The USA's goal with its military "surge", from early 2007, was to damp down Iraq's conflicts enough that the US-friendly Iraqi government could acquire political solidity and do some real social reconstruction.

That hasn't happened. As the *Financial Times* (07.01.08) summarises it: "The retreat of the armed movements does not appear to have been accompanied by a corresponding increase in the authority and legitimacy of the Iraqi state. General Petraeus has said that as al-Qaeda activity lessens in Sunni areas, 'mafia-like' criminal organisations... expand to fill the gap".

## Solidarity with the Iraqi labour movement against both the US/UK occupation and the sectarian militias remains the indicated policy for socialists.

In short, Iraq is quieter because it is more tightly and tidily controlled by local mafias. The Pentagon report has 64% of Iraqis saying they feel safe within their own neighbourhoods, but only 34% thinking they can travel safely outside the neighbourhood.

The relative quiet may not hold through to January 2009, as Bush hopes. In April it will become constitutionally possible to set up a new autonomous "region" in the South on the model of the Kurdish region in the north. Some Shia-Islamist groups strongly support a "region" covering a very large Shia-majority territory; others want a smaller "region" including only Basra and two other provinces; yet others oppose any "region". The clash could turn violent.

Even more explosively, a decision on the status of the northern oil centre of Kirkuk, claimed by both Kurds and Arabs, has been delayed from a previous deadline of 31 December 2007, but only for some months.

But the relative quiet may hold. In particular, the sharp drop in recent months in US military casualties — which ran very high in summer 2007 — probably makes "bashing on" sustainable for Bush.

In the longer term, even relative quiet should enable even an incompetent and corrupt govern-

ment to increase electricity and water supplies, to create a few more jobs, and to make the Iraqi army more solid. It may open up what American politicians have hinted at as their preferred way out: a military coup, setting up a "soft" military dictatorship, which the USA could keep sufficient distance from to deplore but to support.

A move which may symbolise Iraq's militia-based political forces shifting to "softer", longer-term strategies is the recent decision of Moqtada al-Sadr, leader of the Shia-Islamist Mahdi Army, to take time out to study to win higher clerical rank. But at present all substantive political stabilisation is speculation for the future.

Even a limited dampening-down of sectarian civil war should be good for the Iraqi labour movement. The teachers' union staged protests in December to demand pay rises and better security in schools. (The latest figures I can find, for April 2007, indicate that on average 70% of Iraqi students stay away from school because they or their parents reckon it is not safe to attend). Generally, the labour movement still seems very harassed and on the defensive. If the relative quiet takes the form of a tightening of control by local militias — mostly sectarian and political-Islamist — over their respective areas, it may actually make things worse for the labour movement than the previous chaos.

Solidarity with the Iraqi labour movement against both the US/UK occupation and the sectarian militias remains the indicated policy for socialists internationally.

In the winter 2007-8 issue of *Survival*, the journal of the International Institute of Strategic Studies, US academic Christopher Fettweis has published an article arguing that the consequences of the US "scuttling" from Iraq would not be "catastrophic".

It is an important article for us to study. The brutality, arrogance, desire to use Iraq as a test-ground for "neo-conservative" follies, and downright corruption of the US/UK occupation has shaped the horrors of the last four and a half years in Iraq. We have denounced that, step by step, in *Solidarity*.

But we have also argued for denunciation of the sectarian militias, and opposed slogans like "troops out now" which suggest that an unrestrained battle for power by the sectarian militias would be some sort of "self-determination" and a lesser evil than the status quo. On the contrary: a lurch into full-scale civil war would be even more destructive of the labour movement, of elements of democratic life, and of possibilities of self-determination, than the current slower horrors.

Does Fettweis prove that estimate wrong? His article, as far as I know, is the first reasoned effort to argue the issue. As he comments, mostly "those who support an immediate pull-out do not doubt catastrophe, but instead seem to be willing to live with the inevitable dire consequences".

Much of Fettweis's argument proceeds by refuting the most extravagant predictions of catastrophe by US right-wingers — "step back

from Iraq, and al Qaeda will throng the streets of the USA's cities", that sort of thing.

His argument is shaky in parts, because it depends heavily on the idea that "the unprecedented is unlikely". Governments in the Arab world have mostly been very stable for decades now, and "power vacuums in Arab societies tend to be filled rather quickly". But the state of affairs in Iraq today is already unprecedented in the history of the region. Unprecedented things are already happening, so further unprecedented things can't be that unlikely.

He may well be right, though, in his essential thesis, which is — though he does not word it thus — that scuttling from Iraq would not be catastrophic for US imperialism. US world power would take a blow with the scuttling, but not one it could not recover from, and arguably less damaging than the cumulative drain of blood, treasure, and prestige through an occupation that not even the ardent "neo-conservatives" now believe likely to yield any positively happy outcome.

But what about the prospects for the peoples and the working class of Iraq? "Temporary chaos in the wake of a US pull-out is quite likely", writes Fettweis, cheerily. But that is not too bad. "A government — perhaps three — will soon emerge... possibly in the wake of civil war". (Notice that he does not suggest that the existing Iraqi government could survive). "The new government(s) might resemble Iraqi precedents" — i.e., be like Saddam Hussein's tyranny — "more than Washington would like" — more than Iraq's people "would like", too! — but there will be "stability".

"It is not hard to imagine Iraq descending into the kind of chaos that engulfed Algeria in the 1990s, where tens of thousands died during a particularly vicious civil war". There will "most likely" be "ethnic cleansing until the various sides are able to come to an agreement, increased short-term regional tension and uncertainty, and bitter domestic discord for a generation".

But "in the long run" there will be either "political accommodation or a civil war that eventually someone wins".

In short, Fettweis claims only that there will not be a complete political implosion of the region, or *unending* full-scale civil war in Iraq. And he is probably right about that. But the "non-catastrophe" he expects would still be a catastrophe for the new Iraqi labour movement and for the elements of democracy in secularism in Iraqi society; and also, probably, for any prospects of democratic self-determination for the peoples of Iraq, rather than their country being bloodily torn apart.

The prospect of the Iraqi labour movement asserting itself politically against both the occupation and the sectarian militias, uniting broad sections of the population around it on issues like privatisation, food supplies, housing, and jobs, and shaping at least a limited democratic and secular self-determination for the country, is a difficult one. But it still not time to give up on it and opt instead for Fettweis's "stability of the grave"!

# For a working class campaign against fascism

*"Only one thing could have stopped our movement — if our adversaries had understood its principle and intentions and from the first day had smashed with the utmost brutality the nucleus of our new movement."*

Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*

*"To bar the road to fascism, to bar it once and for all, it does not suffice that workers oppose it physically at demonstrations; it does not suffice to denounce its infamies ... Today we defend ourselves against the rise of reaction, but ... to be efficacious this resistance must transform itself into a struggle for power."*

Leon Trotsky, *Conversations with a Dissident from Saint-Denis*

BY CHARLIE SALMON

IN the 2005 general election 192,746 people voted for the British National Party. Each of the BNP's 119 candidates received an average of 1620 votes. On local election polling day, 3 May 2007, the BNP received 292,911 votes — a ninety-seven fold increase since the year 2000. Over the last four years the BNP has doubled the number of councils where it contests seats and has quadrupled the number of candidates. As of the last local elections, the BNP held fifty council seats.

Election results can tell us some things. On the surface these figures show an increasing return on an ever increasing number of BNP candidates. They stand as evidence that given the choice between a Labour candidate, a Tory or whoever else, large numbers of people are prepared to tick the box for a fascist. Election results act as a warning to working class organisations that something is going on. They do not tell us what that is or how to combat it.

British fascists have made great efforts to transform themselves from a group oriented to street agitation, outright racism and anti-Semitism, threat and intimidation into a "legitimate" political operation. Though they still lurk in the shadows, the shaven headed, jack-booted, monosyllabic thugs have all but vanished from

the limelight. They have been replaced by slicker, populist political operators — people like Sadie Graham and newly "media-friendly" Nick Griffin. But a new suit and toned down rhetoric do not make for a complete transformation. The still rumbling crisis in the BNP has publicly exposed the true nature of the group. With each side in the dispute calling the other "Nazis" and "extremists" the liberal media and anti-fascist news sources have had a field day. Few have paused to ask how such an organisation has built a base of support and grown so rapidly in so short a space of time.

The relative success of the BNP cannot be isolated to a parting of ways with past fascist political methodology. In previous periods of right-wing resurgence where fascist groups rose from the sewers, subjective as much as objective circumstances played a part in flushing them away. In the 1930s and 40s Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists faced stubborn, heroic resistance from working class and Jewish organisations. In the mid-to-late Seventies, when the National Front could claim a membership of 20,000 and managed to circulate five million leaflets in one year, mass political, community and cultural mobilisations — not exclusively called by the Anti Nazi League — drove fascists from the streets. Today's anti-fascist groups are a pale imitation of the past and the absence of militant working class opposition to fascism is a pressing concern.

## THE WORKING CLASS, LABOUR AND THE BNP

**T**HE enemies of British Nationalism continue to parrot the claim that the BNP is a 'racist party.' This claim is most often repeated because the BNP unashamedly addresses itself to the issues and concerns of the indigenous British population, and because it seeks to ensure that British people remain the majority population in this country." (*Is the BNP Racist?* from the BNP website)

The BNP no longer appeals to working class voters on the basis of outspoken race-hate

alone. A change in social and cultural attitudes means that crude racism is not acceptable to a majority of people. The fact that the labour movement has never tackled racism in a consistent and wholesale way means that residual — but deeply held — racist attitudes are there to be exploited.

The BNP does this by conflating very real working class concerns with the presence of minority and immigrant populations. They claim to be defending the interests of an "indigenous population" who suffer from unemployment, poor housing, health and education services because "immigrants" are either given preferential treatment or "flood" an area in overwhelming numbers. Gordon Brown recently jumped on this band-wagon when he shamefully promised the following to a meeting with the GMB union:

"It is time to train British workers for the

## Recent BNP propaganda focuses upon "explaining" the crisis in jobs, housing and public services.

British jobs that will be available over the coming few years and to make sure that people who are inactive and unemployed are able to get the new jobs on offer in our country."

Had this statement appeared without credit most people would assume it spilled forth from the mouth of Nick Griffin, not a Labour Prime Minister. Since 1997 this Labour government has pursued a hard-line policy of attacking asylum seekers and immigrants. They are scapegoated by the right wing press and the government reacts by issuing ever more draconian policy statements. Rather than tackle head-on the racist myths spread by the *Daily Mail* and BNP, the Labour Party of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown has pandered to them.

This strategy has a dual effect: it gives political cover for the very real failings of the Labour

Party over the past ten years and legitimises the political message of extreme right-wingers and the fascist BNP.

The BNP has built a base and made electoral advances in predominantly working class areas where the wilful neglect and attacks of this government find concrete material expression. Child poverty, inadequate housing, homelessness, insufficient public services — from health through to education provision — remain everyday realities in British society. Those in work face poor conditions and pay. In the absence of a combative trade union movement and the presence of a legal framework that militates against the emergence of class-wide solidarity, workers are effectively abandoned. Add to this the emasculated local structures of the Labour Party and wider labour movement — the traditional means by which working people expressed their concerns and fought for change — and we have a situation ripe for fascist agitation.

Recent BNP propaganda — both locally produced and in national publications — focuses upon "explaining" the crisis in jobs, housing and public services. For instance, in an article headlined "NHS at Breaking Point" the BNP blamed the crisis in the NHS not on under funding but on Polish immigrants who have "poured" into Britain. Are the BNP lying when they point out problems in public services? No, but the spin they put upon such problems is political poison. An anti-fascist campaign that either ignores such issues or focuses upon the "positive aspects" of society fails to address the real questions and concerns of the working class.

## UNITE AGAINST FASCISM AND SEARCHLIGHT

**U**NITE Against Fascism (UAF) and the Searchlight organisation — a group that produces a monthly anti-fascist magazine and runs some local campaign groups — have major political faults. UAF is essentially a political coalition of the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Action — a small Stalinist sect close to Ken Livingstone. It claims the support of most major trade unions and a variety of religious organisations. The political foundations of UAF are built upon the SWP's interpretation of the United Front tactic. Leon Trotsky outlined the basis and need for a united front as follows:

*"So long as it does not hold this majority [of the working class], the [revolutionary] party must fight to win it. The party can achieve this only by remaining an absolutely independent organisation with a clear program and strict internal discipline. That is the reason why the party was bound to break ideologically and organisationally with the reformists and the centrists who do not strive for the proletarian revolution, who possess neither the capacity nor the desire to prepare the masses for revolution, and who by their entire conduct thwart this work ... But it is perfectly self-evident that the class life of the proletariat is not suspended during this period preparatory to the revolution. Clashes with industrialists, with the bourgeoisie, with the state power, on the initiative of one side or the other, run their due course. In these clashes — insofar as they involve the vital interests of the entire working class, or its majority, or this or that section — the working masses sense the need of unity in action, of unity in resisting the onslaught of capitalism or unity in taking the offensive against it. Any*

A section of the mural celebrating the Battle of Cable Street



*Anti-fascist protests clash with police in Glasgow, 1991*

party which mechanically counterposes itself to this need of the working class for unity in action will unfailingly be condemned in the minds of the workers" (my emphasis).

Revolutionary socialists advocate the formation of a united front to fight for working class interests on the basis of unity between established working-class organisations. Trotsky advocated such a tactic to counter the rise of fascism in Germany in the 1930s. In practice the SWP denudes the united front of its essential working class orientation. For example:

**Q. Does UAF practically unite working class organisations?**

A. If all Trotsky means by unity is getting trade union general secretaries to sign a piece of paper, then yes — but this is not what Trotsky meant. For socialists, "unity" means a unified and purposeful action. UAF "appears" when the SWP thinks it politically expedient to roll it out. This means either turning SWP branches to anti-fascist activity at election times or turning out leading members for protests and conferences. There is no evidence of work towards major mobilisations of trade union members. No joint initiatives above the printing of T-Shirts and balloons. No practical unity.

**Q. Are socialists "politically independent" inside UAF?**

A. It is not possible for the SWP to be politically independent without tearing UAF apart. Sir Iqbal Sacranie — chair of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) — was invited as a headline speaker to UAF's 2006 national conference. Bad enough that the MCB has reactionary Islamist politics. Add to this Sir Iqbal's appearance on Radio Four where he labeled LGBT people as immoral, harmful and responsible for spreading disease and you see just how far the SWP will go to "unite" people. For them, the united front has no class content.

**Q. But the SWP has a record of working hard against fascism.**

A. This is true but the "work" they do is politically bankrupt. The following appeared on a recent UAF election leaflet: "Far right extremist groups are seeking to exploit the traditional low turnout at local elections to make inroads on 4 May and have provocatively described the elections as a 'Referendum Day on Islam'. The MCB urges all people of goodwill to vote in the 4 May elections to ensure that fascist groups are comprehensively defeated at the ballot box." Nothing much wrong with this statement: it's right to point out

the racist politics of the BNP and urge people to vote against them — no problems here. Except that this is all the leaflet has to say, and the man saying it is an outspoken homophobe — Sir Iqbal Sacranie. If anti-fascist propaganda fails to take up working class concerns, then it fails the working class.

*Searchlight* originates in a magazine published by Labour MPs Reg Fresson and Joan Lester in the 1960s. After the magazine folded in 1967, Gerry Gable — who remains a central figure in the group — maintained a small organisation. It eventually began publishing again in 1975, when the National Front became a significant presence.

The main activity of the group remains collecting and exposing information on the far right with a focus on Britain. In addition to this important work — which seems to involve maintaining a network of infiltrators — *Searchlight* runs the "Stop the BNP" campaign group.

Stop the BNP has a much healthier approach to building local groups and relating to local issues than UAF. For example, the "Keighley Together" group ran a very successful, grass-roots response to BNP activity in their town.

But the campaign materials produced by *Searchlight* leave a great deal to be desired. Where UAF has a rabid homophobe, Stop the BNP has Alan Sugar, who appeared in material produced for the 2007 local elections. Alan Sugar has nothing to say about poorly funded public services and attacks on the working class. "Hope Not Hate" is the main political message of Stop the BNP materials — rather than relating to real issues and offering working class solutions, there is a preference for accentuating the positive. It is an inadequate response to the opportunism of the BNP in its current phase.

A rational response to the current phase of BNP activity must combine the sort of work carried out by Stop the BNP — the creation of grass-roots groups that campaign on local issues — together with a serious work in the trade unions.

#### WORKING CLASS ANTI-FASCISM IN THE 1940s AND 1970s

THE history of working class anti-fascism in Britain is often hidden behind stories of mass street protests and rock concerts.

But the organised working class has played a central role in disabling fascist political initiatives in the past. In the two periods where British fascist organisations gained some prominence — in the mid-to-late 1940s and 1970s — trade unions lobbied, organised and mobilised their memberships against them.

The immediate post-war period saw the emergence of small fascist propaganda groups. In spite of Hitler's defeat and a growing public appreciation of the horrors of Nazi Germany, these groups held street meetings, mass leaflet drops and agitated their politics at every opportunity. The release of Oswald Mosley from wartime internment in 1943 encouraged the remnants of his British Union of Fascists on the offensive.

An indication of the level of trade union involvement comes from a collection of 302 letters sent to the Home Office between January 1945 and December 1948. According to Dave Renton (a semi-official historian of anti-fascist campaigning), of the 302 letters asking the Labour government to act against the Mosleyites, one third came from trade union branches. "If we were to add the letters from groups of workers and socialist organisations, from tenants' associations and from individuals rooted in working-class campaigns, the proletarian aspect would represent a clear majority" (Renton).

The signing of a letter is hardly an indication of militant anti-fascism — especially when the letters in question called upon the Home Secretary to impose state bans on fascist groups — but post-war anti-fascism was not a letter writing campaign. Fascism became a central concern of trades council and shop steward groups. They politically educated members on the dangers of fascism, encouraged them to keep watch for activity and in Birmingham formed an "anti-fascist league".

The Anti-Nazi League (ANL) of the 1970s claimed the support of "30 branches of the AUEW engineers union, 25 trades councils, 13 shop stewards committees, 11 NUM lodges, and similar numbers of branches from the TGWU, CPSA, TASS, NUJ, NUT and NUPE" (Renton). Some unions set up their own campaign groups, for instance the NUM held a "Miners Against the Nazis" conference in 1979.

What these two examples show is the latent potential of trade unions to mobilise anti-fascist sentiment — to engage in working-class

politics. In both cases the relationship between different wings of the Labour Party and the far-left (the CPGB in the 1940s and SWP in the 1970s) produced some very uneven outcomes. On the one hand the Labour right wing took a naturally conservative approach to such a campaign. Inside the unions they attempted to stem the influence of Communists and Trotskyists by restricting access to young members' conferences, for example. The political methods of postwar Stalinism and the Socialist Workers Party alienated a good many activists.

The current tactics of the BNP make a labour movement based campaign all the more important. It is not just a case of mobilising large numbers of people to protest against fascists but of providing political ideas and organisational structures to address working class concerns.

### We need to encourage genuine non-racist action for working-class interests on housing, employment and welfare rights.

#### THE ANTI-FASCIST CAMPAIGN WE NEED

THE BNP characterises the current period as the start of a "quiet revolution". They claim to speak for a "silent majority" of people abandoned by the major political parties and excluded from the gains of wider society. As "Proud Nationalists" they defend the "indigenous" people of this country against the threat posed by "ethnics" and "reds".

Through hard work and a tactical change of direction the BNP has built serious local organisations that work hard to relate to local, working class concerns. In areas where the Labour Party has all but collapsed and where trade unions have few organic links in communities, BNP branches can be the only political operations relating to people's concerns. In many areas the situation is desperate.

We who oppose fascism do so primarily because we value freedom: freedom of speech, the freedom to organise and the freedom to protest. The BNP's freedom to operate is freedom to organise intimidation, as well as to spread violence and race hate. We defend the free speech of those who fight for positive non-racist changes to society as well as the freedom of traditionally victimised sections of our communities against the threat of fascist organisations such as the BNP. The BNP attempts to penetrate social movements and trade unions; and to take elected positions as councillors. They do this in order to foment division and racism as well as to identify their opponents and look for ways of intimidating them. We therefore advocate

- That the BNP should not be given any recognition as deserving a place in any genuine democratic debate.

- That all community organisations — but particularly trade unions and councils — do their utmost to isolate and remove them from their midst; thus preventing them from using any democratic façade behind which to organise.

- That as far as possible BNP activities should be blocked by mass pickets and mobilisations of local communities backed by the radical and trade union movement.

The BNP pretend to be a party of working class protest; at times even to be left wing critics of the Labour government. What is worse is that many people vote for them believing this to be true. We cannot allow the BNP to continue to peddle this monstrous lie.

It is an essential aspect of effective anti-fascist campaigning therefore that we

- encourage genuine non-racist action for working class interests on housing, employment and welfare rights as well as
- promoting non-racist democratic working class organisations, such as trade unions, to organise around such issues.

We need a united anti-fascist campaign in which a diversity of views are welcome but we need to build a campaign that does not compromise the work of our constituent organisations and campaigns in taking up such issues.

Such a campaign — mobilising the labour movement with consistent working class politics — will not only challenge the threats and lies of the fascist BNP but go some way to re-educating our class with socialist ideas.

# My mum the terrorist

**L**AST week my seventy year old mother, who walks with the aid of a stick, was deemed a security threat by a bus driver. The driver had already failed to stop for her once, yet was very quick to call the police when she tried to board the bus on her second attempt, using her stick to keep the back door open.

Yes, it was naughty, and she shouldn't have done it, but waiting for half an hour for a bus when you've recovering from a knee replacement operation is not exactly a pleasurable experience. Watching it drive past you twice is painful.

This isn't just an everyday sorry tale of an inconsiderate driver and a disabled passenger. My mum wears a headscarf; and in the current political climate she has become a target for a whole range of prejudice and racist stereotyping.

"You could be a terrorist!" barks the bus driver.

"Do I look like a terrorist?" my mother asks.

Sniggers from driver and the three racist old ladies who have been most outraged at my mum's petulant behaviour.

Their sniggers meaning that "yes actually you do; you look like one of 'them'".

"I'm tired of watching you lot break the law", snipes one of the old ladies.

"You're being racist!" my mother retorts, "I just wanted to get on the bus!"

"Me a racist?" shouts the bus driver. "Well we shall see what the police have to say about that!"

And so the police were called. They asked my mum for ID, and took her address and date of birth.

"The bus driver said I was a terrorist. She's being racist!" My mum complains to the police officer.

"No she's not!" The policeman snaps back. "That's the terminology that's used these days, love".

My mum is confused, upset and angry for being treated like a criminal.

"Well I'll close the case and put it down as a misunderstanding" says the PC.

A misunderstanding? A woman who has spent two days crying in front of her TV, watching terrorist bombers rip apart her native Pakistan is then herself accused of being a terrorist! A misunderstanding? A woman who has used London's buses for forty years and who today couldn't board a bus without being subject to suspicious glances and accusations of being suicide bomber!

A misunderstanding? You could call it that. Or you could say it was a sign of the racist and bigoted times we are living in.

Faryal Velmi

# Defend Tommy Sheridan?

**I**N mid-December of last year Tommy Sheridan, former Scottish Parliament member and leader of the Scottish Socialist Party was arrested and charged with perjury.

In 2006, after the *News of the World* had carried articles alleging that he had engaged in extra-marital affairs and visited a swingers' club in Manchester, Sheridan took the newspaper to court and was awarded £200,000 in damages after the jury found in his favour.

In the aftermath of the trial — which had seen leading figures in the SSP give evidence, under protest and unwillingly, against Sheridan — the SSP split. Backed by the Socialist Workers Party and the CWI (Scottish equivalent of the Socialist Party), Sheridan walked out from the SSP and formed "Solidarity".

In the Scottish Parliament elections held in 2007 the four remaining SSP MSPs lost their seats. So too did Sheridan and the other SSP MSP who had left to join "Solidarity".

The *News of the World* lodged an appeal against the verdict in favour of Sheridan. The police also began an investigation into whether perjury had been committed in the course of the trial. It was that investigation which culminated in last month's arrest and charge.

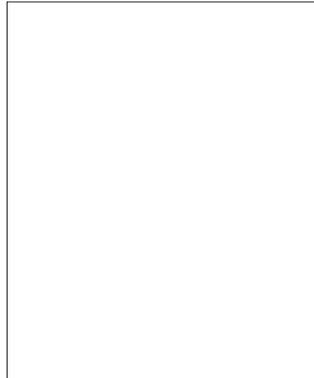
Sheridan's trial is not expected to take place until late 2008. And the appeal by the *News of the World*, for obvious reasons, cannot be heard until after completion of the perjury trial.

In public, the SSP has dismissed last month's events as matters of little significance:

"The SSP notes the charging of former member Tommy Sheridan with perjury. The SSP is far more interested in campaigning to improve the lives of working people in Scotland... etc etc."

This seems a rather curt dismissal of the charging of such an important former member. Sheridan was, after all, the party's first MSP. His marriage ceremony was covered in the party's paper. His face adorned SSP t-shirts. Sheridan enjoyed tremendous popularity, and the SSP "cashed in" (politically) on that personal popularity.

But the imposition of charges and the fact



that a trial is pending place limitations on what the SSP (or anyone else) can say about Sheridan and the alleged perjury.

"Solidarity" has responded to Sheridan's arrest very differently. (But it must be a matter of some debate as to whether "Solidarity" can be said to still exist: neither the CWI nor the SWP now shows much enthusiasm for it, it never attracted many 'independents', and not a few of those who did join it have since resigned.)

According to statements on the "Solidarity" website, socialists "across the UK and beyond have come together to launch a campaign and website in support of victimised... Tommy Sheridan." "Solidarity" is "prepared for one hell of a battle in 2008."

The campaign is demanding "an end to the Murdoch witch-hunt" (presumably a populist way of saying that the charge against Sheridan should be dropped), an end to the squandering of public money on "the billionaire's vendetta" (a reference to the £500,000 spent to date on the police investigation), and a public enquiry into the actions of the police, the legal establishment and the Murdoch empire.

So far the campaign — which was launched just before Christmas — has attracted support from George Galloway, RMT General Secretary Bob Crow, Paddy Hill (one of the

Birmingham Six), Gerry Conlon (one of the Guildford Four), various leading figures in the Socialist Party (Godrich, Nellist, Bannister, etc.), and the SWP (Rees, German, Bamberg, etc.), a few dozen other names which mean nothing to anyone who does not know them personally, and John Palmer.

Even allowing for the fact that Tory politicians such as Jeffrey Archer and Jonathan Aitken have been jailed for perjury, it seems fair enough to assume that there was an element of "singling out" in the decision to launch a perjury investigation after the 2006 trial. To that extent the campaign in defence of Sheridan has a point when it raises the charge of a "witch-hunt" against Sheridan.

On the other hand, Sheridan has increasingly become a celebrity figure (performing at the Edinburgh Fringe, and running his own radio show) with only residual ties to political activism. And the split in the SSP was very much a product of Sheridan's self-centred decision to initiate legal proceedings against the *News of the World*. Sheridan's trial will therefore hardly be a case of "socialism on trial".

Sheridan is arguably entitled to some degree of sympathy, and maybe even support. Sheridan has not been charged with recklessly splitting the SSP. He has been charged with committing perjury in a libel trial involving the *News of the World*.

But hyping up Sheridan as the latest socialist martyr, in the manner of the remnants of "Solidarity", makes no sense at all.

Whatever the outcome of an eventual perjury trial later this year, it will not turn the clock back. If Sheridan were to be found guilty of perjury, for example, it would not undo the split in the SSP and reverse the SSP's loss of its MSPs in the 2007 elections. A guilty verdict will not undo the damage which has been done already.

Sheridan's trial, when it eventually takes place, is sure to receive an equal amount of publicity. In fact, it is likely to be the media event of the year (at least in Scotland). But it is difficult to believe that the credibility of the left as a whole, after a week of mud-slinging in court, is not going to emerge from the trial rather weaker than it was at the outset of the trial.

# Hare Rama Hare Harrow

**T**HE first state-funded Hindu faith school in the UK — the "Krishna-Avanti primary school" — is set to open this September in Edgware, north-west London. The sponsor is none other than the International Society for Krishna Consciousness — aka the Hare Krishna movement.

In 2000 the organisation was forced to pay out £5 million to more than 400 people who claimed to have been abused at 12 Hare Krishna schools in the US during the 70s and 80s. While they seem to have cleared up their act since, the Hare Krishna is still widely considered to be a cult.

A spokesperson for ISKON disagrees, describing it as a "young and exciting" movement comparable to the Christian Alpha course. Well that's a comfort! The school is already over-subscribed and there are plans to open a second Hindu 4-19 year old faith school in Barnet — again under New Labour's city academy programme.

Perhaps the most worrying aspect of the emergence of these schools is the vocal and opportunistic political support being given to ISKON by other Hindu organisations in the area which are no doubt willing to support

their more happy-clappy competitor in paving the way for their own groups to run schools in the future — notably the HSS, the British front-organisation for the Hindu-Fascist RSS, the militia wing of the Hindu-nationalist BJP in India.

The HSS is long established in NW London and has been given political cover by local Labour Party figures over the years. The RSS is responsible for the genocidal massacres of Muslims in Gujarat in 2002, and the HSS is accused of raising money in the UK for the RSS using disaster relief charities. Cadres were evicted from my own former school in Kingsbury a couple of years ago for using the premises for military drill training.

About one third of the 21,000 state schools in England are faith schools, the vast majority Christian. Of the 48 that are non-Christian, 37 are Jewish, seven Muslim and two Sikh. 63 per cent of Jewish children attend Jewish schools.

Tahir Alam, education spokesman for the Muslim Council of Britain, said last September: "There are half a million Muslim children at school in the state sector, but only a handful of Muslim schools. If you are a Christian child, you have a 33 per cent chance of attending a school of your faith. But if you

are Muslim, the chances are 0.75 per cent." The MCB also claim a "significant interest" among about 30 of England's 115 independent Muslim schools to enter the state sector.

While other so-called socialists, including the SWP, have spent the last few years scuppering attempts to mount a campaign through the NUT against faith-schools in the name of such "religious equality" — accusing left-wing secularists of racism and Islamophobia — *Solidarity* and its supporters in the labour and student movement have consistently argued for the abolition of all existing faith schools funded by the state and an end to all private involvement and profiteering in the education sector.

We are fighting for the rights of children to a secular education with teachers and children who might be socialist, atheists, of different cultural, political, linguistic and religious backgrounds — (relatively) free from segregation imposed by parents and "communities" and free from doctrines that seek to demonise gay people and oppress women and attempt to subjugate young minds to belief in God.

Robin Sivapalan

# Andrew Glyn, economist of the left

June 30 1942 –  
December 22 2007

BY BOB SUTCLIFFE

ON December 22 2007, Andrew Glyn, left wing economist and prolific author of books and articles about capitalism, died of a brain tumour.

When Andrew began teaching economics at Oxford University in 1969, the capitalist world was experiencing major political turmoil. Memories of the US civil rights movement were fresh, France's political explosion of the previous May still echoed around Europe and workers in many countries were engaged in the most active struggles for decades.

In this atmosphere large numbers of workers, students and teachers were radicalised and Andrew, already something of a rebel during his Etonian education, was to become one of the most influential of this new generation of socialist scholars and teachers. From his base in Corpus Christi College, he was to spend most of the next 38 years teaching economics and writing critically about the recent history and present state of capitalism. As a teacher he acquired a legendary reputation due to his infectious enthusiasm, bordering at times on the euphoric, and to the fact that, as one student has put it, "he challenges your mind but not your dignity".

One thread unites most of his books and articles: his interest in the way income and welfare are distributed under capitalism, both among individuals and between labour and capital – in other words the economic manifestations of class, a dimension which is all too often absent from conventional economics. In the 1960s he emphasised the sharp rise in the share of income going to labour (the "profits squeeze") and warned that the capitalist class would be impelled to use its political power to reverse this trend. To defend its gains, the working class would have to turn to a more aggressive form of politics.

When the capitalist counter-attack came, in the forms of the Thatcher and Reagan governments, the attack on unions and the spread of neoliberal doctrine, Andrew, as well as criticising it, seized the opportunity to play a significant practical part in the resistance. During the historic miners' strike of 1984–5 he went far beyond expressing solidarity and standing on picket lines; he used his economic skills to produce a series of newspaper articles and pamphlets which destroyed the Coal Board's economic arguments for pit closures.

Dave Feickert, former head of research of the National Union of Mineworkers, on learning of Andrew's death, recalled that he was "one of the economists who went to the aid of the mining communities against the pit closures of the 1980s and 90s. Their [these economists'] solidarity was vital... With their help, we won cases against closure, but sadly the National Coal Board — later British Coal — went ahead anyway. Andrew, the first academic

economist to join the fray, in 1984, [worked with us] to produce *The Economic Case Against Pit Closures*" (a pamphlet published by the NUM). John Moyle, the last President of the Kent NUM has said of Andrew: "He will be greatly missed and remembered for his intellectual inspiration and support of the working class. In the great year long strike of 1984/85 his work and philosophy were of great assistance to our rank and file miners and our women's support group..."

After the end of the strike, labour defeats multiplied and trade union membership and strength declined. By the turn of the century Andrew was writing not about the "profits squeeze", which he had identified in the early 1970s, but about what might be called a "wages squeeze". "The extraordinary turnaround in the relative fortunes of labour and capital over the past 30 or so years" is the major theme of his last book, *Capitalism Unleashed: finance, globalisation and welfare*, the second edition of which was published only weeks before his death. This book well exemplifies Andrew's particular style as an economist — a critical perspective on capitalism, a masterly understanding and presentation of complex economic data, an exceptional ability to combine the techniques of modern economics with the concerns of the classical economists, especially Marx, and a readable, not overly technical, style of writing.

He never lost sight of the idea that the ultimate purpose of writing was political. In *Capitalism Unleashed*, he analyses the current instabilities in the world economy, as he says, not for their own sake but as part of the "difficult task of devising policies to advance the cause of egalitarianism which has taken such a bettering over recent decades". Another prominent socialist scholar wrote in a letter to me after Andrew's death: "Andrew was pretty close to my 'ideal' of a committed intellectual".

Among Andrew's many passions beyond political economy were reading novels, good movies and, most of all, jazz. He would constantly listen to recordings from his incomparable collection. A few days after the diagnosis of his illness, he confided in me that if he had not been an economist he would have liked to be a jazz pianist.

Whatever the loss to jazz, I am happy that this did not happen. If it had, the left would have lost one of its most original and important intellectuals and I would probably never have met the most joyous, affectionate and dependable friend that anyone could wish for.

**Bob Sutcliffe was co-author with Andrew Glyn of the book *British capitalism, workers, and the profit squeeze* (1972)**

• This obituary was written for *Red Pepper* magazine — [www.redpepper.org.uk](http://www.redpepper.org.uk) — and will appear there in the February/March issue.

# Dumbing down the legend

BY AMINA SADDIQ

A SMUG doctor, played by Emma Thompson, gives a TV interview about how she has adapted viral bacteria to, in effect, cure cancer. Then, behind the words "Three years later", we see the sunlit cityscape of New York — but a New York totally abandoned, no people, no traffic, its buildings falling into disrepair and vegetation sprouting up from the concrete.

This is the incredibly effective opening of *I Am Legend*, the new sci fi/horror film starring Will Smith which is the third adaptation of the 1954 novel of the same name, the other two being *The Last Man on Earth* (1964) and *The Omega Man* (1971). In this version, which moves the action from mid-70s California to NY 2012, we learn from flashbacks that the cancer cure virus mutated, killing 90% of the human population; most of those who survived became infected with a disease that made them something like vampires: feeding on the blood of the uninfected, very difficult to kill but unable to live in sunlight.

The result was the collapse of civilisation; by the time the film opens, the protagonist, Robert Neville, believes that he is the only healthy human left alive, though he sends out increasingly desperate broadcasts in the hope that someone will find him. (If a lot of this sounds clichéd: the novel was extremely influential in terms of the zombie genre, the idea of a world-wide apocalypse due to disease and explorations of vampirism.)

The film's first hour hits hard because, against the lush computer-generated background of the decaying city, it focuses on the

monotony and horror of Neville's daily life. Every day is a struggle; he must get up at sunrise to maximise the time available to him, check and fix the defences of his house, conduct experiments in search of a cure, care for the dog who is his only companion, hunt and scavenge for food and equipment, make sure he is home well before sunset, stay fit — and, most difficult of all, stay sane. The logistical holes in the plot — okay, so he generates his own electricity, but how come the water's still running? — don't really matter. It is the question of how, and whether, a human being can maintain themselves in such a grim and prolonged struggle that is interesting.

Unfortunately, about an hour in, the film begins to succumb to a number of Hollywood viruses: action movie shoot 'em up battles, mawkish sentimentalism, religion (I can't really expand on this without giving too much away). These problems are, moreover, implied in the changes that have been made from the book.

I've only just started reading *I Am Legend*, so I'm not sure, but it seems that there the "legend" referred to is how the infected think of Neville; here, predictably, it is about his legacy to human civilisation, his desire to save the world (while the infected are changed from rational but amoral beings to snarling CGI beasts).

This is not by any means a stupid film, and I'd highly recommend it, but it has been subject to the dumbing-down treatment.

Incidentally, part of what keeps Robert Neville going is the philosophy he sums up in a quote from Bob Marley: "The people that are trying to make the world worse never take a day off, so why should I?"

# Will there be left unity in NUS?

BY SOFIE BUCKLAND, ENS MEMBER ON NUS NATIONAL EXECUTIVE (PC)

A report on discussions between Education Not for Sale and Student Respect (published in a spirit of openness and accountability)

Representatives of the SWP/Student Respect met members of Education Not for Sale on Sunday 9 December to discuss the idea, proposed by ENS and others, of a united left slate for the six full-time officer elections at NUS conference 2008.

I wholeheartedly welcome the decision of the SWP/Respect to participate in discussions. However, the meeting highlighted a number of barriers to progress.

Among these are the SWP's insistence that Respect must have at least half the places on any such slate; their advocacy of including the small and conservative Student Broad Left group while excluding others including Socialist Students; and — most problematically — their bizarre and sectarian insistence that unity is impossible unless the slogans "Troop out of Iraq now" and "Freedom for Palestine" are included in the joint programme for the slate.

At a time when the NUS leadership are attempting to undermine the very existence of NUS as a national student union, and a united left is needed to oppose them more than ever, this sort of sectarianism is particularly damaging.

The SWP comrades bent themselves into all sorts of contortions in order to argue that questions including NUS democracy, the education funding campaign, direct action and an orientation to the labour movement are purely secondary; that the anti-capitalist politics, radical demands and militant tactics shared by ENS and Respect are essentially irrelevant; and that support for their particular slogans on Iraq and Palestine is the defining issue in the student movement.

Opposition to the occupation of Iraq and solidarity with the Palestinians are, rightly, common ground, and should of course be included; but the idea that the SWP's particular formulations are the only possible basis for unity is so weird that it can only be intended as a means of preventing unity by excluding those who disagree with them, as some in ENS including members of Workers' Liberty do. It is important to note here the fact that the Stop the War Coalition, led by the SWP, does not use the slogan "Troops out now"; and that in the past, for instance at the Stop the War national council in Leeds in November 2004, the SWP argued against and prevented the adoption of this slogan. Similarly but even more tellingly, last year's Student Respect manifestos did not include "Troops out now" either!

Members of a united slate would, of course, be free to make clear their own politics and raise their own slogans in their manifestos, speeches and campaign literature. However, there is no reason why the slogans insisted on by the SWP should be made a precondition for agreeing a basic common programme. Look at it the other way round. A majority of ENS members would certainly want to include an explicit statement of support for workers' and other democratic movements in Iraq and Iran — something which the SWP, to their discredit — would no doubt oppose. How would they react if we argued that unity was impossible unless, for instance, "No to war, no to the Islamic Republic — solidarity with Iranian workers, students and women" was included in the joint programme?

Despite their sectarian posturing, which we hope SWP and Respect members will prevail upon their leadership to reconsider, the fact that the SWP/Respect sent representatives to discuss unity is clearly a positive step forward.

We will be meeting again to discuss further in London on Sunday 13 January. For more information, get in touch: volsunga@gmail.com

## SOLIDARITY WITH IRANIAN STUDENTS!

At the start of December, the Iranian government arrested over 40 left-wing Iranian student activists. Some have been released but many are still in prison. (A full update will appear in the next issue of *Solidarity*.) Meanwhile, there have been a number of protests held in London, and British students and education workers have launched this statement of solidarity. If you would like to sign, or help our campaigning on this, email volsunga@gmail.com

### FREE THE DETAINED IRANIAN STUDENT ACTIVISTS!

As education workers and student activists, we condemn the detention of over forty student activists by the Iranian regime since 7 December (16 Azar in the Iranian calendar). This date has been a day of student protest in Iran for many years; it is now a symbol of Iranian students' struggle against the theocratic-capitalist regime of the Islamic Republic just as it was against the dictatorship of the Shah.

Activists were arrested in the run up to the day of action, and following the demonstrations and actions which took place in a number of cities. Many are now reportedly being held in Tehran's notorious Evin prison and have been subjected to torture.

This is just the latest act of repression dealt out by the Islamic Republic; it follows an intense crackdown on the Iranian workers' movement and the brutal victimisation of leading trade unionists such as Tehran busworkers' leader Mansour Ossanlou and Saez bakers' union activist Mahmoud Salehi. The Iranian regime is acutely aware of the growing alliance between Iran's workers' and student movements; meanwhile it is using the threat of a US attack to legitimise itself and step up its repression of dissent.

We call on the Iranian government to imme-

diately release all detainee student, women's and labour movement activists, and call on all working-class, student, left and anti-war activists and organisations in the UK for solidarity with Iranian workers, students and women against the dual threats of US militarism and theocratic-capitalist oppression.

## SOFIE BUCKLAND FOR NUS WOMEN'S OFFICER!

Since the takeover of the NUS Women's Campaign by Labour Students four years ago, the potential for student women's organising to lead an active, political regeneration of the women's movement has been squandered. The campaign has the potential to reach out to thousands of women, as well as having relatively plentiful resources (staff support, a budget and a fully-paid officer) with which to build actions. However, the Labour women's officers have been content to put the NUS Women's Campaign logo on a few initiatives by others, and do precious little themselves.

The priorities of the campaign have looked good on paper — women at work, childcare and abortion rights — but in practice these have led to little other than meetings with NGOs or TUC bureaucrats, and motions calling on the government to do something. In fact, the campaign committee actively voted against direct action on abortion rights, with Women's Officer Kat Stark claiming the time "isn't right" as a justification for her casting vote.

ENS Women have consistently opposed this inaction, and the political lethargy of the campaign, leading the way with events like Feminist Fightback and the torchlit march for abortion rights when our student leaders have refused to organise. With elections coming up, it's time to challenge Labour Students for control of the campaign — ENS Women member and NUS Executive Officer Sofie Buckland is standing for National Women's Officer as a socialist feminist candidate.

### ENS Women stand for:

- A serious campaign to rebuild campaigning, political women's groups on every campus
  - Working with trade union women's sections to organise a national demonstration for women's liberation
  - High profile campaigns, including direct action, on abortion rights and a living, equal wage
  - Consistent international solidarity - with grassroots women's, workers' and student movements, not with NGOs and 'progressive' governments
  - A Women's Campaign that fights the Blairite leadership of NUS, and stands with workers and students fighting the Brown government.
- If you want to see a Women's Campaign that does all these things, whilst reinvigorating debate and democracy within the women's movement, support Sofie! Get involved with the campaign — volsunga@gmail.com or 07815 490 837

## Don't Turn Back the Clock on Reproductive Freedoms!

Join the Feminist Fightback picket of the Christian Medical Foundation to defend the time limit on abortion and oppose attacks on the reproductive rights that women have won in the last 40 years.

Friday 25 Jan 4pm,  
6 Marshalsea Road, SE1 1HL  
London (nearest tubes  
London Bridge and Borough  
High Street)

More: 07890 209 479,  
laura\_schwartz2003@yahoo.co.uk or  
www.feministfightback.org.uk

## A working-class alternative to 'green wash'

### BY A UNITE ACTIVIST

ON Sunday 13 January, activists from the labour and anti-climate change movements will meet in Nottingham to develop the Workers' Climate Action network. This network aims to fill a void among those fighting climate change; to create unity of purpose and tactics between these often-divergent forces, with a purposefully working-class focus.

Looking at the numerous political campaigns that my union runs, there is no mention of the environment or progressive policies that seek to slow or halt runaway climate change. Not content with simply turning a blind eye, UNITE and GMB belong to a pro-aviation lobby group called 'Flying Matters' — in partnership with BAA, EasyJet, BA and the CBI.

Of course, they are attempting to look after the jobs of their members, but what is important is how they do that. Rank and file members should offer an alternative that is genuinely in the interests of the working class and does not rely on their employers' initia-

tives. The ruling class will not be the main victims of climate chaos, though it will be their policies that have caused it.

To take one example, the criticism made of aviation as a source of emissions has never taken into account those who work in the industry. Actions neither seek to provide workers with alternative work nor tackle the reasons of long hours/low pay, poor public transport and short holidays that ties people into using this industry. Choice is the luxury of the rich; green activists must recognise this before promoting consumer-orientated solutions to structural problems. It is not a surprise then that one Unite branch officer reported low morale due to constant to public criticism of the role of aviation.

The official energy and industry policy of the main unions — most importantly Unite — must be smashed and replaced by radical and worker-centred solutions to climate change that understand these problems and can fight inside their industries with solidarity from those outside aviation, power stations and heavy industry.

One clear answer is to take action. Working people should fight for jobs and the long-term

sustainability of humanity — we cannot leave it to profit-mongers, a subservient state or elitist greens. The causes and consequences of climate change do not exist outside of the divisions of class therefore the solutions cannot either.

Workers' Climate Action is an initiative begun by activists in Sheffield, which seeks to build a national network that will intervene in labour and green movements to put forward ideas and action that match radical demands with practical solutions. Among other tactics, we will seek to mobilise workers in environmentally damaging industries to campaign for alternatives, help to steer climate change activists into dialogue with workers, and to make their action united against those causing this problem and towards solutions that seek new systems to another crisis born of limitless capitalist expansion.

We welcome all activists who want to be a part of a democratic and radical alternative to elitism and greed. For more information about the campaign and organising of the Workers' Climate Action network email maxdbass@yahoo.co.uk

# The last days of the old order in Northern Ireland

Part seven of a series on the Northern Ireland crisis of 1969 by Sean Matgamna — the start of nearly 40 years of “The Troubles” — and the responses of the left. For earlier articles see [www.workersliberty.org/node/9693](http://www.workersliberty.org/node/9693).

HIGH above the Bogside, the Catholic ghetto that proclaimed itself in large letters painted on the gable end of a house, to be “Free Derry”, Frank Roche and I stood, one night in September 1969, on the perfectly preserved ramparts of the gigantic stone fort — the walls around the old city of Derry — built at the beginning of the 17th century to protect the Scots and English Protestant settlers from the “wild Irish” natives.

Catholic Derry had recently had to build its own bulwarks of defence — against the Northern Ireland “Protestant state”. After a near-three-day long battle, in which the Bogside had defeated the Royal Ulster Constabulary and crowds of civilian Protestant youths who had tried to invade the area, the Bogside had been barricaded off in a self-policed area. For two months, the Bogside, run by an improvised defence organisation, the Derry Citizens’ Defence Committee, would be a “no-go” area to the representatives of the Six-County state. As we looked down, the barricades were still up, the recently-arrived British soldiers patrolling on one side, the defenders of “Free Derry” on the other. Roche and I were among the sizeable number of “volunteers” encamped at Celtic Park, people who had gone there, belatedly as it turned out, to help the Catholics defend themselves against police, Protestant communists and expected invasion by the British army.

Roche, a Trotskyist from the South, would the following year lob a canister of CS tear gas from the visitor’s gallery on to the floor of the House of Commons, to give the British MPs a taste of what their army was dishing out in the Catholic areas of Belfast and Derry. For that he would draw an 18-month jail sentence.

As we looked down at the sprawling slum now sheltered behind its own improvised “walls of Derry”, Frank, who had been silently contemplating the scene for a while, said suddenly: “You know what it reminds me of? One of those scenes in Hollywood Westerns, with the tepees of the defeated Indians clustered down below, outside the cavalry fort!”

That neatly summed up the history of the peoples of that area over the previous 400 years. I thought it caught everything — the sense of defeat and of being conquered and dispossessed that was a living part still of the consciousness of the Catholics, and the sense of victory and of uneasy mastership, up on

the ramparts, so to speak, that was still vehemently, if uneasily, alive for the Protestants. Alive for both the celebrants in the marches and other rituals of the Unionist Orange Order and the Catholics who watched, sometimes fearfully.

Those were the attitudes that led to the explosion on 12 August 1969.

Most of Catholic Ireland had won its independence fifty years earlier, after a long series of rebellions — centuries of subterranean agrarian warfare by peasant secret societies like the “Whiteboys” and the “Defenders” against savagely exploitative English landlords, then by political parties at Westminster, and, finally, by the army of Dail Eireann (the Dublin parliament that had seceded from Westminster in 1919), the first “Irish Republican Army”, who fought the occupying British forces in a two and a half year War of Independence (1919-21).

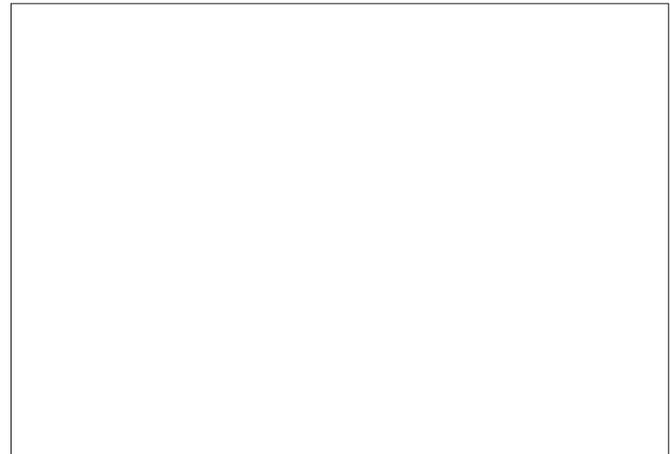
Most of the county of Derry was Protestant, but the Catholic majority in Derry City and in a large swathe of territory on the borders of the Six Counties and west of the Bann had been arbitrarily excluded from that Catholic-nationalist victory. Beaten down, and included against their will in the “Protestant state”, they were treated there as a menace to the state — which they were: what else could they be? — and, therefore, as second-class citizens.

Derry, where everything was arranged as if to blazon forth the realities of Catholic-Protestant relations in Northern Ireland, was the engine of the Catholic revolt in 1968-9.

Most of the young people of Catholic Derry had no hope of a job unless they emigrated. They rioted and demonstrated and built barricades in the week that followed the police attack on the 5 October 1968 civil rights demonstration. From them on Catholic Derry went into a state of chronic revolt against the city’s rulers and the Six Counties sectarian establishment. Barricades against the RUC went up there in January 1969, and again in April. Serious fighting between Bogside youth and the Royal Ulster Constabulary broke out in mid-July at the time of the big Orange demonstrating season.

Apart from Belfast, Derry is Northern Ireland’s only city. It has a Catholic majority and stands on the border with the independent Irish state. The Catholic two-thirds of the population was ruled over by a discriminatory Protestant-majority city corporation, whose control was based on open and blatant and seemingly unassailable electoral fraud.

For at least a couple of decades before 1969 that fraud, and others in other towns, had been the subject of an Irish and international campaign of exposure (in the British labour movement, for instance). But nothing shifted. British governments, before the Wilson Labour Government that took office



Barricades go up at the junction of William Street and Rossville Street, 12 August

in October 1964, had simply left the Unionists to it. That was an “internal affair” of Northern Ireland and for half a century the convention held that Westminster, which held overall responsibility for Northern Ireland, did not “interfere”.

With local government power went patronage in jobs and housing. With a council majority dependent on gerrymandered electoral boundaries, in a system where a vote went with the tenancy of a house, went a built-in drive to deprive Catholics of council houses and therefore also of local government votes.

This was a simmering revolt that had a hopeless — even in some ways, among the unemployed youth, a lumpen — quality to it. It simmered and intermittently exploded in rage. Its natural political objectives — both the nationalist objective of overthrowing Protestant ascendancy and achieving national self-determination, and the possible working-class objective of taking part in a root and branch attack on the capitalist system — were blocked.

The nationalist objective, to which almost all Catholics subscribed, was blocked by the fact that in the Six Counties as a whole, the Derry Catholics were part of a minority — a bespoke minority, so to speak, tailor-made by those who designed the Six Counties “Protestant state”. The possible working-class objective (to which very few subscribed) was blocked off by the fact that in Ireland, and in the Six Counties intensely and actively, the working class was bitterly split between Catholic-nationalists and Protestant unionists.

Nothing had been done by political parties or groups to explore a possible democratic modus vivendi between Catholic Nationalists — with their ultimate aim of a united Ireland — and Protestant-Unionists who were determined to remain united with Britain, or at any rate, determined not to become a powerless Protestant minority in a Catholic-majority all-Ireland state.

Since Gladstone’s first Home Rule Bill, in 1886, and in a different form, long before that, the political desires of Protestant Unionists and Catholic nationalists had confronted each other as brutally hostile forces for which there was no possible common ground.

This was “Derry of the burning zeal” (as the poet Thomas Kinsella called it). Without the taint of hyperbole, one might even speak of “The Commune of Derry” — but of only Catholic Derry. It was by no means only the youth. The Catholics of all ages were unwilling to go on as for the previous decades.

They were encouraged by the sympathy and outrage on their behalf in the media and

in the British Labour government, which openly demanded reform. They were spurred on by fear of more sectarian onslaughts by the RUC, the B-Specials, and the Paisleyites.

In January and April 1969, Catholic barricades had gone up against the Six Counties state. An editorial by John Palmer in *Socialist Worker* (on August 21, 1969, when Catholic Derry and parts of Belfast were barricaded off) depicted what they were groping towards.

“In Derry in particular the Bogside has a real chance of holding out. The Derry people, who are overwhelmingly anti-Unionist, were never consulted about the Border. They were forcibly co-opted into the Northern State.... One day the people of Derry will take their city from the Chichester-Clarks and the slum landlords.”

They Catholics of Derry were groping towards breaking away from the Six Counties.

The 6/26 County partition of Ireland was a curse on the Protestants within it as well as to the Catholics.

Many elements entered into the social and political discrimination of which the Catholics were the victims, very importantly a general scarcity of jobs and of material resources; ages of Catholic/Protestant animosity; and the inbred belief among the Protestants that the Catholic Irish were an inferior people.

The things that kept it alive, that united Protestant-Unionists to defend and sustain it, were not only political differences and the competition for scarce resources, but also, a lot of fear. The Protestant-Unionists were a minority on the island. It had taken an armed near-revolt, and the credible threat of a real revolt, to keep them from being delivered by Britain to their age-old enemies as a minority in a Home Rule Ireland.

The way the 26 Counties had developed into the “Rome Rule” which they had said Home Rule would inevitably be suggested to them that their fears and their efforts to avoid being a Protestant-British minority in a Catholic-ruled Ireland had not been needless.

They feared “betrayal” by London, and were on the look-out for it. They saw the pressure for reform from London as the thin end of the wedge whose thick end would be an attempt to force them into a united Ireland. They saw the Catholic mobilisations for civil rights as Republicanism writ small, but small only for the moment.

And they were not wrong in all of this, though their own backlash speeded up and intensified what they feared. They understood how things stood in their Six Counties “Protestant state”. The basic “civil right” the

Catholics lacked was national self-determination. And the Catholics were in the majority in large swathes of the state's territory; for a large part of them, it was not a case of being a minority inescapably interlarded with a majority population. The Six Counties Catholics outside of Belfast were an artificially created minority, an artificially severed section of the majority population in the island.

The logic of the demand for civil rights formulated by the civil rights movement — and not too many links along the chain of social-political development, either — was a demand for the abolition of the Six Counties state. There were people at the heart of the civil rights movement — the Republicans — whose ultimate goals were Irish unity, and who saw the civil rights movements and its mobilisations as a first stage in the overthrow of the Six Counties state. (Desmond Greaves, for example, the political guru of those who led the IRA up to the Provisional IRA split in December 1969, saw it that way. See the memoir of Greaves by one of them, Anthony Coughlan).

The candid Catholic-nationalist answer to those fears was: why shouldn't we? What right have you to expect anything else?

It was a tragic communal-national-religious antagonism, build in to the Six Counties, and given a special intensity and intractability by the artificiality of the state. That Northern Ireland should begin to break apart on 12 August 1969 in Derry was in the very nature of the Six Counties.

What follows is a stark outline of the breakdown of the old order in Northern Ireland.

### THE EVENTS OF AUGUST 1969

**B**EFORE the general breakdown of "law and order" between 12 and 15 August 1969, parts of Northern Ireland are already on fire. Serious clashes between police and Catholic youth had erupted in Derry on 12 July.

Not only Catholic Northern Ireland is inflamed. The Protestant heartland in Belfast, the Shankhill Road district, is disaffected too.

**Weekend of 2-3 August 1969:** Shankhill Road Protestants riot, fight police, and loot "Protestant" shops.

The clashes start when police try to disperse a crowd which has gathered around Unity Walk flats, near the Shankhill Road, which are "Catholic".

Petrol bombs are thrown at the RUC. A seven-hour battle is fought on the Shankhill Road, the heart of Protestant working class Belfast, involving the use of water cannon, baton charges, and riot trucks. The police, in helmets and with riot shields and using long truncheons, baton-charge the crowd.

There is extensive looting of "Protestant" shops, from grocers to furniture shops. Kids hand out goods from the looted shops. Shops are set on fire.

Both Ian Paisley and Major Ronald Bunting are jeered and booed when they appeal to the Protestant crowd to go home.

The mile-long Shankhill Road is like a battle zone, strewn with bricks; most shop windows are broken. Two cars and a van are used as a barricade, and set on fire. The RUC use armoured cars to break the barricade. A petrol bomb sets an RUC man on fire. Troops have been brought in to back up the cops if necessary, but they are held in reserve.

Over 20 RUC are injured, two seriously.

There is talk of a curfew, but that would require either troops or extra police from Britain to enforce it, so it is not attempted.

The RUC reserve force, the B-Specials, an all-Protestant militia, is mobilised on the Shankhill to prevent further looting.

The reason why the Stormont government does not ask for troops — which have in the past been used for riot control in Northern Ireland — is that British Prime Minister Harold Wilson has said publicly that if Stormont needs troops to maintain law and order then the whole constitutional relationship between Britain and Northern Ireland will be examined. The cost of troops is too high for the Belfast regime. They will be a last resort.

**Monday 4 August:** Rival Catholic and Protestant mobs clash. Both sides petrol-bomb the RUC. On the same day, Bernadette Devlin appeals to British Home Secretary James Callaghan to put the RUC under the control of British police officers. She wants the recall of the Westminster Parliament to discuss the situation in Northern Ireland.

Labour Home Secretary James Callaghan sees "law and order" as the Belfast government's responsibility.

The RUC says it blames "Trotsky-anarchists" for the trouble in the Catholic Falls area.

In response to the clashes between the Protestants and the police, Bernadette Devlin (who had been elected in April as Westminster MP for Mid-Ulster), speaking at a PD meeting in Enniskillen, appeals to the Protestant workers who have been fighting the police to back the civil rights movement. Protestant workers should unite with their Catholic brothers and sisters against the Unionist government, she says. The Government has shown its readiness to use police — "the armed wing of the Unionist party" — against Protestants as well as Catholics.

Devlin notes the statement by the Protestant Shankhill Defence Association that the "police are no longer the friends of Ulster Loyalists and never can expect our help again". The naivety here is mind-boggling! The Shankhill Defence Association is led by the ultra-Paisleyite and lunatic John McKeague.

**Tuesday 5 August:** Paisleyites storm the Council Chamber in Lisburn. The newspapers print pictures of riot-gear-clad police and streets littered with broken paving stones, and showing blackened patches from petrol bombs.

**Wednesday 6 August: The Belfast Newsletter** reports the results of a poll it has had taken: 90% want a ban on all parades. "Intimidation" of Catholics living among Protestants and vice versa is already rampant in Belfast. The "Catholic" Ardoyne Tenants' Association says that it knows of 60 Catholic families forced out.

**Sunday 10 August:** a meeting is held in Celtic Park, Derry. John Hume and Eamonn McCann and others speak. McCann says that the reason to oppose violence is that it will be the wrong sort of violence directed at the wrong target, Catholics and Protestants. He pledges that if they get past Tuesday's parade (12 August) he, McCann, will "never again be associated with a united Catholic platform" (which is what the Celtic Park meeting was). In its own way, this is a sort of public prayer.

The supplicant promises God to do good in future if only God will grant something wished for now: peace!

Neill Gillespie, an old quarry-voiced Republican veteran of the Irish War of Independence, also speaks. "If we are forced to fight, then let us in God's name fight as peace-loving men". He will be the titular Secretary in Derry of the breakaway Provisional Republican movement a few months later.

Eddie McAteer, leader of the Nationalist Party, appeals to Dublin: "Help us if Derry erupts". He hopes that "our watching brethren in the South would no longer stand aside".

"Tuesday may", he says, "raise the curtain on the last terrible act of the age-long Irish drama".

**Monday 11 August:** the newspapers report that prayers were offered up in chapels and prayer-houses all over Northern Ireland. Though nobody expected the scale of what will happen, everyone expects a catastrophic eruption of communalism from the Apprentice Boys march in Derry on the 12th. 15,000 are expected to march.

Appeals are made by Stormont MPs and Westminster Labour MPs for the Northern Ireland government to ban the march. The Unionist government knows that a ban will be defied. An attempt to enforce the ban would lead to fighting. London, which had overall responsibility for Northern Ireland, accepts the decision of the Unionist government. All the responsible authorities fatalistically hope for the best. Nothing is done to avert the catastrophe.

Thus Northern Ireland moves like a sleep-walker towards the general breakdown of 12-15 August.

Most of the social and moral authorities in Northern Ireland proclaim a fervent desire for peace.

Dr Abernethy, Governor of the Apprentice Boys, says that he wants peace. John Hume, the independent MP for Foyle, wants peace. He says that the Apprentice Boys have a right to march, but it would be unwise for them to exercise that right. Northern Ireland is now in the grip of a mechanism more powerful than pious hopes.

### TUESDAY 12 AUGUST

**T**HE Apprentice Boys march begins, if not quietly, peacefully. Trouble starts at 3pm. Catholic youths gather behind police barricades in William Street, at the entrance to the Bogside, jeer and gesture at the marchers and the stationary lines of police, then throw stones and bottles at them.

After a long period of this, 200 police and a very large crowd of Loyalists, led by an armoured car and police jeeps, attempt an invasion of the Bogside. They are beaten back. But again they attack. The battle that will rage for two days and ignite Northern Ireland has begun.

One newspaper quotes from a young Catholic fighter, shop worker Maureen Roche. "They've had this coming for a long time. We've had to put up with their bullying for years". Another youth agrees: "They've believed that they can beat us up whenever they want to, but that day is gone".

From the walls, Protestants shout abuse at the Catholics: "Fenian bastards".

Catholics dig trenches in the street to stop police water wagons. They burn mattresses

and furniture from their own homes. Police begin to use CS gas. Soon the Bogside will be swamped with it.

The fighting begins to spread outside Derry. At Strabane, 14 miles from Derry, the RUC station is besieged. In Dungannon on the night of the 12th, clashes leave 30 injured.

An eyewitness report by Joe Carroll in the nationalist Dublin paper, the *Irish Press* of 18 August describes how the fighting started.

"Fateful stones thrown... despite the efforts of civil rights leaders like Hume and McAteer". After the first stones landed on the Apprentice Boys, "riot police with helmets and shields and clutching batons massed in several lines, confronting the Bogside youths across steel barriers."

"From 4.15 to 5.05 the police were showered from close range with every type of missile, which they tried to ward off with their shields, but they made no attempt to throw back."

"Most of those who witnessed the scene must have felt rather sickened by the sight of cursing youngsters firing literally lethal weapons at exposed policemen who, it must be emphasised, at this stage made no attempt to enter the Bogside proper..."

"This was a crucial episode because along with myself it was witnessed by thousands of Protestants, both marchers and spectators, with what mounting fury can be imagined. The stoning was also carried out in defiance of commands and appeals by civil rights stewards and the leaders mentioned earlier [Hume and McAteer]."

"The sequel was inevitable — a police charge and the scattering of the youths — but the escalation of the violence which also ensued was certainly avoidable, and could fairly be said to have precipitated the rest of the week's tragic events."

"Having driven the Bogside youths back up William St, leading to the Bogside proper, the police made a deliberate decision to make a lightning charge down Rossville Street past the eight-storey flats which command the entry into the Lecky Road, which could be described as a spur of the Bogside."

"Worst of all, the police made no effort to deter or even discourage a pack of Protestant extremists who followed on their heels, stoning Catholic flats and such people as came within range."

"The police immediately retreated then to the fringe of the Bogside, but in those few minutes the pivotal event of the rest of the week's pattern of violence had taken place. The police had 'invaded' the Bogside and had tacitly permitted Protestant thugs to form part of the invasion."

"The news was a clarion call to the whole of the Bogside, and the handful of youths who had defied their stewards' appeals were now joined by practically every man, woman, and child in the Bogside, in building and maintaining defensive barricades and ensuring an enormous supply of petrol bombs..."

"It has proved impossible to exclude violence and the Partition issue from the civil rights campaign not because, as Major Chichester Clark alleges, Republicans and hooligans subverted the movement, but because the Paisleyite element, seeing the threat to Unionist dominance in the civil rights movement's legitimate demands, did everything in their power to pervert the campaign into a naked confrontation of violence and hate. Unfortunately they succeeded".

## WHERE WE STAND

**T**ODAY one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class has one weapon: solidarity.

The **Alliance for Workers' Liberty** aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for the labour movement to break with "social

partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

### WE STAND FOR:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.

- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.

- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

Where Nationalist Party leader Eddie McAteer had on the 10th called for 26 Counties troops to intervene, Bernadette Devlin and Eamonn McCann issue a statement on 12 August appealing to London:

*"The riot which has taken place in Derry today, and resulting violence in other areas of Northern Ireland, show that Northern Ireland is ungovernable under the present constitution. Westminster must now act.*

*The barricades in the Bogside in Derry must not be taken down until the Westminster government states its clear commitment to the suspension of the constitution of Northern Ireland and calls immediately a constitutional conference representative of Westminster, the Unionist government, the Government of the Republic of Ireland, and all tendencies within the civil rights movement.*

*The situation in Derry at the moment is such that the people of Bogside are fighting off the combined forces of the police and the Paisleyites, who are operating as a single unit. The police have already entered Bogside with the support of the Paisleyites in defiance of orders from senior officers. Therefore the RUC is out of control and can no longer be considered as the force of law and order. The country is now in a state of chaos.*

*It is the responsibility of Harold Wilson and his government, who should have acted almost a year ago and who have repeatedly been warned by ourselves and others of the possible consequences of their deliberate and total inaction. It may well be of personal concern to Harold Wilson that, given his own position in the Labour Party, he cannot take the political risk of intervening in Northern Ireland. We consider the lives of Irish people more important than the career of Harold Wilson". (Irish Press, 13.08.69).*

### WEDNESDAY 13 AUGUST

**T**AOISEACH Jack Lynch appears on TV, making an emotional declaration on what is happening in the Six Counties, and to warn that his government could not continue to "stand idly by". *"It is clear now that the present situation cannot be allowed to continue... It is evident... that the Stormont government is no longer in control of the situation.*

*Indeed the present situation is the inevitable outcome of the policies pursued by successive Stormont governments... The Irish government can no longer stand by and see innocent people injured or worse... It is obvious that the RUC is no longer acceptance as an impartial police force. Neither would the employment of British troops be acceptable, nor would they be likely to restore peaceful conditions — certainly not in the long term".*

He announces that he is moving the Irish army up to the borders of the Six Counties to set up field hospitals to receive refugees, already streaming out of Northern Ireland.

The 26 Counties army is mobilised. Reserves are called up. They are moved up to

the border. Large demonstrations take place at the British Embassy in Dublin in outrage at what was going on. Southerners cross the border into the border town of Newry and join local Catholics against the RUC.

Rumours spread in Dublin among journalists that the Irish cabinet is divided and Lynch's speech is a compromise — that at least three Dublin ministers want the Irish army to move into Derry city and the other Catholic majority areas along the border. The three includes the future Taoiseach Charles Haughey, himself one whose parents had fled south in the early 20s.

Plain-clothes officers of the Irish Army are sent to liaise with the Defence Committees and the fighters in Derry, Belfast, and other areas, and to help coordinate them.

Lynch says he has "requested" the British government to seek UN help. He wants either a joint London/Dublin force to control Northern Ireland, or UN troops.

For a short while, the 26 Counties state, whose 1937 constitution lays claim to the Six Counties territory, seems on the verge of getting drawn into civil war and — probably — war with Britain.

The IRA attacks an RUC station in the heavily Catholic area of South Armagh, with petrol bombs. It is feeble enough, but a small foretaste of the future.

On 13 August the Belfast government puts out a call on radio and TV to mobilise the 8000-strong armed Protestant militia the B-Specials. It is taken as a declaration of full-scale war.

In the Stormont Parliament, while the fighting is still going on in Derry, Northern Ireland prime minister Clark describes what is happening as a pre-planned armed uprising, and bitterly denounces Lynch for "Eire's clumsy intrusion"; he accuses Lynch of "hoiliganism".

Lynch's speech encourages the Catholics, naturally, and must give some of them the expectation that they will soon be rescued from their captivity in the Protestant state. It gives Protestants the same idea. It is petrol on the fire.

Coupled as it is by no commensurate action, it is irresponsible to say the least. So is the not dissimilar statement by Cathal Goulding, chief of staff of a very shadowy IRA. He announces IRA mobilisation, and claims that the IRA is extensively active in Northern Ireland. It isn't. It is an extra dollop of petrol on the fire.

The Dublin Fianna Fail nationalist paper, the *Irish Press*, comments: "Virtual civil war hit Derry in the wake of the Taoiseach's speech when 500 cheering men, women and children, hurling petrol bombs and stones, waving the tricolour and shouting 'Up The Republic', charged RUC and B-Specials and drove them out of the Bogside. But their place was taken by a strong group of Paisleyites, who hurled petrol bombs and stones at the jubilant Bogside".

The left is in the forefront of the fight in Derry. The London *Times* quotes Bernadette Devlin telling a crowd: "I want you to fill

your pockets with stones and carry a petrol bomb in each hand. Then we will rush the barricades".

Now Protestants begin streaming in to Derry to help the cops, with pick-axe handles, helmets, and some guns. Some gun-fighting has started.

And Catholics across Northern Ireland are starting to act to take the pressure off Derry. At least eight police stations are attacked, in Belfast, Dungannon, Armagh, Coalisland, Dungiven, Dungannon, Enniskillen, and Newry.

A steady stream of women and children flee over the border to Donegal. What will be a big movement of refugees has started.

In Armagh, the police station is under siege for over 30 minutes. In Coalisland, a crowd forces its way into the police station, breaks windows, and puts petrol bombs through them.

In Armagh, 400 youths march in protest at what is happening in Derry. Paddy O'Hanlon, Nationalist MP for South Armagh, says that they want "to take some of the pressure off Derry".

In Coalisland, 500 defy the ban on marches and meet in the street. A couple of barricades are put up in Dungannon.

In Lurgan, Catholic and Protestant crowds face each other. Catholics put up barricades. Bottles and stones are thrown by both sides, and a few petrol bombs from the Catholic side. Earlier, a crowd had gone to the RUC station to protest at police actions in Derry.

In Enniskillen, stones and bottles are thrown at the RUC, who have interfered with an (illegal) meeting on the events in Derry.

B-Specials are being mobilised to man border posts and to guard the Waterside and Fountain Street Protestant areas in Derry. The *Belfast Newsletter* claims that people from the South have taken over the town of Newry.

In Belfast, 200 people attack Hastings St RUC barracks. One group sets up a barrier across the Falls Road, at the Divis St junction, and set it alight with bombs. Police armoured cars smash two barricades.

100 RUC are on the Shankhill Road, guarding the connecting streets from the Shankhill to the Falls.

A big crowd marches down Falls Road, in Belfast, and sets up barricades at the top and at the bottom of the road.

On TV, Northern Ireland prime minister Chichester Clark tries to calm things by reiterating his commitment to a civil rights reform programme, but declares that he will not shrink to summon "other than police aid". He is threatening the Catholics with the British army.

"Hooligan irresponsibles in our midst, whether they are Protestant or Roman Catholic, are a menace to our prospects as a community".

He hopes the riots will not be attributed to intransigence on the Government's part.

"I take my stand upon these essentials — that houses should be allocated by that public jobs and appointments should be filled

*RUC and Unionists go up Rossville Street 12 August*

on merit alone. That there should be equal protection for the law-abiding, and equal retribution for the law-breakers. No other course is either possible or moral".

He denies that there will be "retaliation" in the Bogside. "We want peace, not vengeance..."

"If the rioters withdraw peacefully to their homes and observe the law, no attempt will be made to exploit the situation. I give this assurance in the name of the Government and in the earnest hope that it may contribute to peace". He was lying on that. Fighters, among them Bernadette Devlin, will be jailed.

The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association warns Chichester Clark that unless police are withdrawn from the Bogside immediately, civil rights meetings will be held in "about 12 places" in the next 24 hours, in defiance of a ban. It is in effect a call for such demonstrations.

### THURSDAY 14 AUGUST

**A***T*MES editorial, noting that all marches have been banned in Northern Ireland, says that it should have been done a month earlier.

"The folly of allowing the Apprentice Boys to trail their coats through Derry is now apparent..."

"The reasonably-formulated political demands, the non-violent demonstrations... are all engulfed in something much more primitive and volcanic, tribal fears and hatreds: this madness, as Chichester Clark called it [on TV] last night".

Frank Gogarty, chair of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, puts out a statement: "The B-Specials are leading the Paisleyites. They are in tenders shooting indiscriminately. They are firing into people's homes. They are shooting all over the place..." He calls for demonstrations throughout Northern Ireland.

A statement from the Executive Committee of NICRA calls for direct rule from London and attempts to define what is happening. "It must be among the greatest ironies of Irish history that parts of Northern Ireland are now in open insurrection, demanding that the British government directly intervene..."

The London NICRA calls on every "able-bodied Irishman to make himself available to go to the North of Ireland for active service". Similar calls have gone out in the South.

This same day (14 August), at about 5.30pm, four hundred British soldiers take to the streets to "replace the RUC". The Belfast government has decided to call on the main British state power. Contrary to Chichester Clark's threat on TV, the troops do not attempt to enter the Bogside or to remove the barricades. The troops' orders are to prevent rioters breaking out in the centre of the city.

About 200 armed B-Specials join the cordon around the Bogside. They are withdrawn on the night of 14 August and sent to patrol Derry's Protestant areas.

Bernadette Devlin says that "we are ready to negotiate with the British Army".

Rossville Street, 13 August

She is quoted in the London *Times* as urging people to fight "the black bastards", the RUC. To criticisms that an MP should not do such things, she sends a message: "Tell them that I did not go to Westminster to join their bloody club".

She demands of Harold Wilson: "call an immediate constitutional conference, and settle the Irish question once and for all".

She tells the people of Bogside: "This fight is between the RUC and us. Defend the barricades to the last. Do not let them come in..."

"The constitution should be suspended immediately. The British Army is no good. The RUC should be controlled by British police officers".

To Protestants she says: "This is us against the RUC. The Protestants should join us in working for a socialist workers' republic".

She tries to persuade the fighters on the Bogside barricades not to disperse, and not to rely on the army.

She warns the crowd that she has talked on the phone to Chichester Clark and asked whether the army is to replace or assist the RUC. The reply was, to assist them. There would be conflicting understandings, between Belfast and London, on what that meant.

Chichester Clark had also refused to guarantee that no-one would come into Bogside until they had had a meeting. Devlin had stipulated that they will only negotiate with the army if the police keep out and the B-Specials are disbanded.

She asks the crowd: "Do you still want to sing, 'We Shall Overcome'?" The crowd is divided. Some boo, and some shout, "Back to the barricades". Most follow the "moderates".

The crowd disperses. Paddy Doherty (a mainstream Catholic, a future SDLP'er), of the Derry Citizens' Defence Committee, is carried on the shoulders of the people, and leads the singing of "We Shall Overcome".

Later, soldiers and residents chat across the barricades.

The British commander, Colonel Todd, meets members of the Derry Citizens' Defence Association, and they agree a three-point peace plan. All B-Specials will be withdrawn from the area, and the RUC will be restricted to normal peace duties. In response, the DCDA agrees to help maintain the peace. (On Sunday 17 August, the Derry Citizens' Defence Association will set out its conditions for dismantling the barricades. "We will remain at war with Stormont until these demands are met". The demands are: abolition of Stormont; disbandment of the B-Specials; release of prisoners taken as a result of the recent disturbances and assurances that there will be no prosecutions.

#### THURSDAY 14 AUGUST, BELFAST

**A**S Derry subsides, fierce fighting erupts in Belfast, where the army has not been deployed. Protestants take the offensive. A large crowd descends on the Falls Road. They surge in the wake of the RUC, and the effect is of a joint movement, as in Derry.

Barricades go up in the Falls. The whole panoply of RUC repression is thrown at the Catholics, including one heavy machine gun able to penetrate through brick: a child is shot dead in his bedroom through the walls...

A few IRA men have guns and use them. There is one light machine-gun, used by a middle-aged man who had dropped out of the IRA many years earlier.

Barricades are thrown up, and defended as in Derry, with stones and petrol bombs. The *Orange Belfast Newsletter* reports: "Belfast swept by bullets and flames. Machine-guns used in Belfast terror".

Pubs are burned in Crumlin Road — one Catholic and one Protestant. Some factories are fired, reportedly by Catholics. Four Catholics are shot dead by police fire: one Protestant is killed by a shot in Divis Street. Two people, one a Protestant and one a Catholic die, shot by civilians. And the fighting is still spreading.

Newry: attempts to put up barricades, fighting with the police.

Portadown: Catholic and Protestant crowds gather.

Dungiven — Orange Hall burned, and the courthouse, and the premises of the Ulster Bank. In Armagh, a Catholic is shot dead.

600 soldiers of the 26 Counties army (three companies) have been now moved close to the border with the Republic.

On the evening of 15 August the British army does what has been done in Derry — it

goes on the streets of Belfast to relieve the RUC and separate the fighters.

On the evening of the 15th, the Army enters the Falls Road.

Catholic houses are burnt that night by Protestants at Bombay Street (Falls Road area) and Brookfield Street (Crumlin Road). After whole Catholic streets have been burned down in Belfast on the 16th the army enters the Crumlin Road area. In Belfast as in Derry the army makes no attempt to force its way into the barricaded Catholic areas.

According to the Scarman tribunal, 1,820 families flee their homes in July-August 1969. Over 80% per cent of the families are Catholic. Ten people are killed; 900 injured. 16 factories and 170 houses are burned down; a further 417 houses damaged by fire.

Over the longer period from August 1969 to February 1973, according to another estimate, between 8,000 and 15,000 families will move as a result of sectarian intimidation. These are the largest forced population movements in Western Europe since World War Two.

James Callaghan makes a statement to, so to speak, accompany the troops: There will be no constitutional change in Northern Ireland without the "consent of the people of the province".

There are hopeful signs too. On Wednesday 15 August at a 4000-strong mass meeting, Belfast shipyard workers declare for peace, and stage a token stoppage at 4pm to show their "concern". They pledge to keep sectarian conflict out of the shipyards. Minister of Commerce Roy Bradford addressed the meeting. Alex [Sandy] Scott, chair of the shipyard stewards, rejects the story that there has been fighting in the shipyard. 2000 workers, Catholic and Protestant, at the Michelin tyre works, Belfast, also proclaim that they want peace.

Lord Fenner Brockway, chair of the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster, calls for suspension of the constitution, that is, for direct rule of Northern Ireland from London.

**Monday 18 August.** Armed groups have besieged the RUC station at Crossmaglen. There is a lorry-load of men, with guns, including sub machine guns. Hand grenades are thrown through the window of the RUC station. They are driven off after an hour. The terrible future is already stirring in the womb.

The *Times* (15 August) reports that the "government here has been watching anxiously reports from the Republic of Ireland as rumours of large-scale IRA activity and Irish army manoeuvre swept the province".

Dublin's Minister for External Affairs goes to London to talk to Callaghan.

The left in Belfast is less prominent than in Derry. Michael Farrell will later tell the historian of the People's Democracy, Paul Arthur, that PD had only ten people mobilised in Belfast at that time. On 14 August PD — Farrell and others — follow where Eamonn McCann and Bernadette Devlin have led two

days earlier, and call for British intervention. The IS in Britain (forerunner of today's SWP), with which Farrell is linked, had implicitly been calling for 26 Counties intervention.

The People's Democracy statement is headlined in the *Belfast Newsletter*: "Suspend Stormont Junta".

It reads: "The welcoming response for the British troops in Derry has shown that the basic cause of the trouble there was the undisciplined and biased RUC.

Not content with provoking war in the Bogside, the Ulster government, hell-bent on self-destruction, has now put 8000 members of their murder gang — the B-Specials — on the streets. This vicious, undisciplined fascist band has already killed one man and wounded several others within hours of their mobilisation.

#### The left shared middle-class Catholic-nationalist ideas, changed only by re-expressing them in the left's own political language.

*It is intolerable that the people of the North should again be subjected to a reign of sectarian terror. Any government which would entrust law and order to this savage gang is unfit to rule.*

*The British government must suspend the Stormont junta immediately if more lives are not to be lost in Northern Ireland.*

The Irish Republican movement has sent a telegram to UN Secretary General U Thant, signed by Tomas Mac Giolla, asking the UN to "intervene".

Eight opposition members — John Hume and others — walk out of the Stormont debate on the situation in Northern Ireland.

The British Army is now in control of security in Northern Ireland. In a few days it will call in the guns of the B Specials for safekeeping in special depots. It will have a short honeymoon period. The barricades will not finally come down in Belfast until mid-September — by agreement — and in Derry, again by agreement, in the second week of October.

#### THE AFTERMATH

**T**HE crisis that erupted in Derry on 12 August, the breakdown of the Northern Ireland state system, would be followed after October — after the decision to abolish the B-Specials and a major gun battle by RUC and British soldiers against Protestant gunmen on the Shankhill — by a lull. Then it would erupt again, in old and familiar forms.

In fact it would not be resolved for decades. Soon it became clear that the whole Northern Ireland system had been sapped and undermined. From August 1969 the British

Army acted as an emergency scaffolding to stop disintegration. The Belfast parliament would be abolished by Britain in March 1972.

What opened in mid-1969 was a major revolutionary crisis. Analysing the experience of revolutions, including Russia's, Lenin had defined three conditions necessary for a revolution to take place. The old order is no longer able to go on in the old way; the ruled, or enough of them, are no longer prepared to go on in the old way; and an alternative to the old order is available.

The Northern Ireland Catholics were no longer willing to go on in the old way, and the old order could not go on in the old way because of the Catholic revolt and Britain's commitment to reform. The great gap in the scenario was in relation to Lenin's third condition: what could replace the old order?

The working class was radically divided and in both its sections, Protestant and Catholic, politically and intellectually hegemomised by "its own" bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie and their national-communalist ideas.

The workers in the South were powerfully militant "on the job", but in no political condition to reshape society. The working class had no independent political organisation to make proposals as to how the divided people of Ireland, or of Northern Ireland, could democratically rearrange their affairs. There was no possibility of a working-class political force to fill the gap.

In neither of the national or communal groups was there a revolutionary socialist force able to plausibly propose a democratic settlement of the "constitutional conflict" (whether Ireland should be independent or affiliated with Britain) and working-class unity on the issues that had led to breakdown and the beginning of communal-nationalist civil war in Northern Ireland.

The left in Ireland, such as it was, used political categories — pro-imperialism, anti-imperialism, sectarianism, anti-sectarianism, British occupation, and so on — to obscure the fundamental issue, the nature of the Catholic-nationalist/Protestant-Unionist divide.

The left was solidly on the Catholic side, the side of the Six Counties' oppressed of the previous 50 years and previous centuries. It was right and necessary to be on that side. But the left shared middle-class Catholic-nationalist ideas, changed only by re-expressing them in the left's own political language, for instance, the "Trotskyist" notion that Ireland was experiencing, or could be made to experience, a "permanent revolution" in which the Catholic nationalist movement would grow over into socialism and working-class power.

From 1970 Northern Ireland would settle into a long low-level communal conflict, half-smothered by the British state, and entwined with a Catholic-nationalist Provisional IRA war against that British state. It was a hopeless and unwinnable war. The Provisional IRA had no policy for the big Protestant-British minority but to subjugate it. Since they could not themselves do that, and civil war could not but result in continued partition, perhaps with a smaller "Protestant state", the Provisional IRA were reduced to trying to force Britain to "persuade" the Protestant community into a united Ireland.

Things have settled down — or seem to have — after the long travail, into the present system of intricately structured bureaucratically organised sectarian power-sharing — a system that, though it is "better" than the Provo war, cannot but work to perpetuate the communalism it enshrines in its workings, and therefore cannot but work to perpetuate the division in the Irish working class.

What happens on the level of big events such as those in Northern Ireland happens because, everything being as it is, it has to. In retrospect what happens assumes the character of inevitability. In fact, things that in retrospect were part of an inexorable movement of given facts may have been in flux before they settled into the congealed jumble of facts that make the event which in retrospect we see as inevitable.

Could things, in the flux of 1969, have gone differently? Were other things possible, worse or better? That is the issue that lay at the heart of the dispute that began at the September 1969 Conference of the International Socialists (forerunner of today's SWP), and occupied the organisation for many months. We will explore that in the next article in this series.

From back page

It is most likely that a jihadist group is responsible for Bhutto's murder — killed as a stooge of imperialism — although some commentators (and not just Bhutto's own supporters) have speculated about it being a collaboration with elements in the military. The protests reflect a fierce, generalised opposition to Musharraf's government over many issues: rising unemployment and inflation, the alliance with the US, and, not least, the killing of hundreds of civilians caught in the cross fire of the military operation in the so-called tribal areas in the north of the country.

Farooq Tariq General Secretary of the Labour Party Pakistan describes the mood: "It is a very volatile, unstable, unpredictable, explosive, dangerous, impulsive, fickle and capricious political situation."

Parliamentary elections due on 8 January have now been postponed to 18 February.

**T**HE assassination has left the western powers worrying about how, and whether, stability is now possible in Pakistan. For the sake of stability, to keep Musharraf in power, to compensate for the disappearance of all popular support for his party, the PML-Q, and to give a democratic facade to the military regime, the US brokered a power-sharing deal between the military dictator and Bhutto.

That deal was scuppered when Musharraf declared martial law, arrested the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and started locking up unruly lawyers who wanted an end to such things as the torturing of prisoners and trade unionists who were fighting privatisation and rising unemployment.

Benazir Bhutto thought twice about ending her chance to get back into power by the back door but in the end she knew, if she wasn't going to lose more middle class supporters, she had to take a stand against the crackdown.

Apparently the US had given the green light to martial law; as far as they were concerned it was all going to be okay as long as Musharraf stood down as army chief (which he did); temporary martial law could still be part of a process to achieve "stability". But what kind of stability were the US looking for? That remains unclear.

Some US politicians had raised the alarm about jihadist groups getting power in Pakistan and having access to the nuclear button. But the Pakistani army is still, by a long way, the strongest physical force in the country; the jihadist groups do not yet have countrywide mass support. Furthermore no section of the military is going to promote the jihadists more than they do already. With its myriad ties to industry, land and public utilities the military needs to protect its institutional predominance and keep the jihadists and all other political forces in their proper place — subordinate.

Musharraf's regime continues to patronise jihadist and other Islamist groups (in Kashmir, Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province) but only in order that they will back up their regime. In the case of the ruling Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) alliance in the North West Frontier Province, they implement neo-liberal policies. The mainstream Islamist group Jamaat-i-Islami (part of the MMA in NWFP) are now calling for a boycott of the February election. But their opposition may be more an opportunist bid to bolster their own base than a serious threat to Musharraf.

The spectre of a jihadist nuclear holocaust is not really the US's main concern! Rather the US wants Musharraf's army to continue and strengthen its policing role in and on the border of Afghanistan — more than ever as the Taliban and Taliban-like militias become stronger.

Nonetheless the questions posed about the future of Pakistan seem more fundamental than they did just a month ago. Now people are asking: will Pakistan remain intact and is Pakistan heading for civil war?

**M**USHARRAF faces a dilemma. If he rigs the vote on 18 February, as he intended to on 8 January, there will be further violent backlash. But if he does not rig the vote he will lose. As long as he stays in power the protests will continue, workers will face more cuts and attacks as a consequence of economic fall out, Islamist violence on the streets will increase.

Yet, despite clear evidence that their strategy is stupid, the US remains committed to



Bhutto: was her reputation deserved?

# Why is Pakistan exploding?

Plan A. As US officials told the *Washington Post* on 30 December, [we still want to see] "the creation of a political centre revolving around Musharraf." Yes, but who the hell with?

In the time-honoured feudalesque style the chairmanship of the PPP has been passed on Bhutto's husband Asif Zadari, who will act as a "caretaker" until his and Bhutto's 19 year old son Bilawal "finishes his studies". Crown Prince Bilawal will then take over. But Zardari, who spent some time in a Musharraf jail facing multiple charges of corruption, hates the military dictator.

Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan's last civilian prime minister, is also not well disposed to the man who ousted him from power in 1999. However his party, which is now contesting the elections (after saying it would boycott them), may now be prepared to do a deal with the party of military clients and sycophants which backs Musharraf, the Pakistan Muslim League-Quadi-i-Azam, PML-Q. This in order to win a few seats in a rigged parliament; after all it could be his big chance to be a "come back kid".

Such are the average in Pakistani civilian politics — its all about self-love, self-gain, self-advancement. The present situation is just another chapter in a depressing political history in Pakistan — of raised expectations followed by betrayal for the Pakistani workers and peasants. Attempts made at "democratic government" are followed by military rule. And each successive attempt to hold Pakistan together by a political or manufactured ide-

ological consensus (e.g. a single Muslim identity) has only increased the ethnic and religious divisions, taken Pakistan away from secularism, given succour to the various Islamist groupings and thrown its people further into poverty.

Benazir Bhutto is now a martyr; her death has given the PPP feudal-capitalist base, and the dynasty at the helm of it, renewed status; neither of these things are deserved. That Bhutto was prepared to help Musharraf and the

**The workers need a party which not only opposes dictatorship but also stands for consistent democracy, freedom for nationalities, an end to economic exploitation, secularism and so on.**

US in order to pursue her own ambitions says a lot about the kind of politician she was and where she came from.

**B**ENAZIR Bhutto's father, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, was in power from 1971 until 1977, when he was kicked out by the military take over of General Zia ul-Haq. When Zia had Bhutto executed, he did not destroy Bhutto's reputation for radicalism. But

what did Bhutto actually stand for? He was an inconsistent nationalist, and an economic autarkist. A self-styled secularist, he also paid lip service to Islamic piety when the situation demanded it.

As foreign minister in the dictatorship of Muhammad Ayub Khan, Bhutto took Pakistan away from reliance on the US and that, in the political consensus of the time, gave him "left" credentials. But Bhutto did that only to form different client relationships — with China for instance.

In 1970 Bhutto helped provoke a political crisis which led to the secession of Bangladesh (previously "East Pakistan"). He backed the army's murderous campaign against the secessionists, while being careful to distance himself from the political regime which oversaw it. Later he made a hypocritical peace with Bangladesh.

As prime minister Bhutto nationalised many major industries. He did not do it to serve the interests of the workers, but to develop and "modernise" Pakistan.

After their father's death, Benazir Bhutto and her two brothers were, in the beginning at least, committed to reform in Pakistan, i.e. a "modernising" state capitalism. Benazir spent time in jail after her father's death. For this she has been called, not unreasonably, brave.

But when she herself became prime minister in 1988, she was not so brave. She did little by way of reform; she did provide employment to some of her supporters. She complained of being stymied by the military, but she did not mount a campaign against them. She was removed as prime minister 20 months later. The popularity of her party endured and she was re-elected in 1993.

Back in power, she was able to do a little more... It is alleged that she and her husband accumulated \$1.5 billion. Bhutto tried to distance herself from her husband's "business dealings", but court cases continue. She also backed the Taliban in Kabul (at the time, the US also thought the Taliban would bring that all-important "stability").

When her brother Murtaza began to kick up a fuss inside the PPP he was murdered by armed policemen. It is said that the decision to carry out the execution had been taken at a very high — political — level; stories about Asif Zadari's involvement continue to circulate.

In November 1996 Bhutto was again ousted, this time by her own PPP President.

**S**O Bhutto's recent championing of democracy and agitation against corruption was entirely hypocritical. The PPP many not be a homogeneous entity — some of its members are human rights activists, lawyers for civil liberties etc — but the Pakistani workers and peasants need a completely different kind of party to lead them out of this impasse. They need a party which not only opposes dictatorship — such parties are two a penny in Pakistan — but also stands for consistent democracy, freedom for the nationalities, an end to economic exploitation, land reform, secularism and so on.

It is therefore extremely important that trade unions and socialists in Pakistan maintain independence from the "mainstream" politics.

Unfortunately some leading trade unionists have attachments to the PPP and have publicly stated their belief in the party's promises to reverse job cuts due to privatisation.

More unfortunate still, the Labour Party of Pakistan (LPP) has now joined the All Parties Democratic Movement (APDM), a grouping of some 20-plus parties, all of whom are boycotting the elections. In the past the LPP had firmly rejected this catch-all political bloc (it has and remains part of a leftist alliance). In December the APDM's political complexion changed somewhat. Nawaz Sharif's party and some of the religious fundamentalist parties left. But the Islamist Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) remain! Other APDM groupings are nationalist, Stalinist etc.

The decision to work alongside JI, is surprising given the LPP's strong record on campaigning for women's rights and stand for secularism. The LPP seem to have thrown in their lot with the APDM because it is "anti-dictatorship", and being anti-dictatorship seems imperative. But being anti-dictatorship is not enough.

However, socialists must still continue to build solidarity with socialists like the LPP (and other small groups) and trade unionists, in the hope that greater dialogue and international links will be of political help in the difficulties they face.

# workers' liberty & Solidarity

## 19 January conference BNP splits: don't let them recover!

BY JACK YATES

THE British National Party is in the throes of a major crisis, the root of which is the outspoken fascism of leading BNP member Mark Collett. Mark Collett is notorious for appearing in two documentaries: Russell Brand's "Nazi Boy" and an edition of *Dispatches* entitled "Young, Nazi and Proud" (see YouTube). Cllr Sadie Graham (head of "Group Development") and party administrator Kenny Smith have been expelled for "gross misconduct" because they raised concerns over Collett's behaviour to the membership and the wider public. But BNP leader Nick Griffin has firmly sided with Collett in this dispute.

The Graham clique — styling themselves as the "Real BNP" and "party loyalists" — have gained the support of significant sections of the organisation nationally.

It is widely acknowledged that Sadie Graham is one of the most competent, articulate and organised fascists in Europe. Through consistent groundwork, community organising and political opportunism she constructed a network of BNP branches, sympathisers and fund-raisers across the country. As champion of the BNP's turn towards the "legitimate" big-time Graham was a significant personality in the party.

Her success in the East Midlands in particular, where she was elected as Borough Councillor for the village of Brinsley, was a model replicated across the country.

The BNP intends to stand in the upcoming Greater London Assembly and Mayoral elections and is currently raising funds for the Euro Elections. Richard Barnbrook — a councillor in Barking and Dagenham and would-be London Mayor — is firmly in the Griffin camp but faces a split in the London organisation with many sympathising with Graham. But a destabilised and demoralised organisation does not make for an effective electoral machine.

A humiliating defeat in London will further cripple the BNP and together with insufficient funds for a European challenge could force a reassessment of strategy.

The BNP may decide to continue business as usual, tolerate the electoral defeats and wait for calmer weather.

Griffin isn't really interested in finding legitimacy through the electoral system but recognises that his much-hoped-for "nationalist revolution" won't happen by magic — any type of "revolution" requires a political base. Contesting elections and scrambling for mainstream acceptance whilst creating an organised political cadre creates this base.

Or the BNP may return to the street fascism of the National Front. That would be attractive to many BNP members. But such a turn would be a turn to more confrontational tactics would see a further haemorrhage of support.

The dispute between Griffin and Graham has exposed the fascist underbelly of the BNP for all to see. We should act decisively to ensure that those who have voted for the BNP in the past or who may be considering voting for or joining the organisation in the future are exposed to the facts.

The BNP has grown in the recent past not merely because of organisational initiative on their part but because of the Labour government's continued attacks on the working class and the relative weakness of anti-fascism.

Any serious anti-fascist organisation should base itself on the concerns of the working-class, the labour movement and combine a critique of BNP fascism with criticism of this government and capitalism more generally.

Anti-fascists in the Nottinghamshire Stop the BNP campaign have started this work already. They have called a regional conference for 19 January with the aim of creating a network of labour movement based campaigns. If you want any further information on the conference or anti-fascism contact [nottmstopbnp@yahoo.com](mailto:nottmstopbnp@yahoo.com) or [www.workersliberty.org/node/9734](http://www.workersliberty.org/node/9734)

• The kind of anti-fascist movement we need, see centre pages

# Why Pakistan is exploding

BY CATHY NUGENT

*"The new Pakistani general [Musharraf], he's just been elected — not elected, this guy took over office. It appears this guy is going to bring stability to the country, and I think that's good news for the subcontinent."* (George W Bush, 1999)

ON 27 December Benazir Bhutto, leader of the Pakistan People's Party was assassinated, killed by a gunman who then blew himself and 21 other people up. The belief that Musharraf was responsible in some way for the assassination has led to countrywide violent protests and riots; over hundred people have been killed. The government claim al-Qaida have taken responsibility for the assassination, but that is not widely believed.

*Continued on page 19*

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